

RELIGIONS OF ANCIENT KASHMIR, A CASE STUDY OF BUDDHISM



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PREFACE

This dissertation entitled "Religions of Ancient Kashmir, A Case Study of Buddhism" is an attempt to look into the growth of religions in Ancient Kashmir, their rise and fall and subsequent consequences on Kashmir society. Historically speaking Kashmir had been one of the most significant Centers of Buddhist Faith and practice. It was a great seat of Buddhist learning. Kashmir has contributed a lot to Buddhism and in turn has got much influenced by the Buddhist faith. Buddhism enjoyed the status of a predominant faith for a period of 10 centuries in Kashmir. But from the 7th Century A.D it began to decline and after 13th Century was completely ousted from the Valley. An attempt has been made to look into the decline of Hinduism and spread of Buddhism in Kashmir and how Buddhism witnessed decline. An attempt has also been made to locate the impress of the ancient faiths especially of Buddhism on the present Kashmir.

For this purpose, whole study has been divided into Five Chapters. First Chapter deals with the concept of Religion and its importance in the Indian Context. It also deals with the sources for the detailed study of

Kashmir History .Second Chapter describes the geography and physical features of the Kashmir. It also contains a precise description of the society, polity and economy of the Ancient Kashmir which is extremely important in order to understand the rise and decline of religion like vital ideas of a society. Chapter 3rd deals with the Religions of Ancient Kashmir .A precise description has been given regarding the various religions of Ancient Kashmir upto the advent of Buddhism. Buddhism, its rise, spread and decline has been briefly mentioned. Buddhism of Kashmir has been described in details (including the role of Kashmir in its propagation) upto its decline. Chapter 4 deals with the interaction of Buddhism with Kashmir and its consequences. In the last Chapter I have drawn the conclusion which revolves round the whole work.

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Mohammad Ashraf Dar

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature and purpose of life and the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a supernatural agency or human being's relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual or divine. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life. They tend to divine morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred life style from their ideas about the cosmos and human nature. Religion is age old since the humans came into existence. It began when human's brain advanced to realize to have faith and worship the systems of the society. Human lived in small groups, regulations and systems were formed to maintain discipline in the group. All small groups had own ideology that were obligatory to all group members. As they were too small in groups, system differed from group (society) to group. In order to initiate members to worship the system an icon was formed that harmonized the ideology. Rituals were essential part that to be carried in occasions for rejuvenation. During this period their rituals were for natural resources. Icons like sun, moon, river, fire etc, spirits icons like group gods and character icon (idols) like devil or angel. Religious belief usually relates to the existence, nature and worship of a deity or deities and divine involvement in the universe and human life. Alternatively, it may also relate to values and practices transmitted by a spiritual leader.

In India religion is considered to be extremely important. Here it is a way of life. For the majority of Indians, Religion permeates to education

and politics. That is perhaps why the religions like Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism born of its spiritually fertile womb.

Buddhism originated as an offshoot of Hinduism in India, but essentially it became popular all over Asia. The personality and teachings of Gautama Buddha, the founder of this faith, have illuminated the lives of millions of people in Japan, China and Southeast Asia. Buddhism is based on the principle of the law of impermanence. According to this, everything is subject to change, although some things may last longer than others. The other basic principle of Buddhism is the law of Causation, according to which nothing occurs due to pure chance. Besides natural forces, it is the karma which leads to the occurrence of all events. When Buddhism arose in India in 6th century B.C, it quickly grew into a great religion due to a multiplicity of reasons, social, economic and political.¹

Nevertheless, after several centuries it began to decline, and by the 13th century A.D, it had disappeared from its native land altogether. A different set of environmental factors played a part in both the rise and the decline. Same was the case with Buddhism in other parts of the country and Ancient Kashmir is one of such regions which witnessed the same phenomena though in a different manner.

A remarkable feature of the origin of the land and people of Kashmir is the legends in which they are woven. According to Nilmat Purana which is the oldest record regarding the legendary origin of Kashmir from a lake (Sati Sara) by Kasyapa. Before the immigration of the Indo-Aryans to this secluded valley, the predominant faith was animism manifested by Naga or Snake worship which has not ceased to exist even

till now and which manifests itself indirectly in the respect and sanctity that is attached to the Nagas or springs (Nag is the name for spring in Kashmiri language) in the valley. With the changing socio-economic fabric of the Kashmir, Vedic religion made its sway over the Naga-cult and became the prominent religion of Kashmir. Vedic religion as in other parts of India resulted in the formation of various divisions within the Kashmiri society, which is generally known as caste system. In this system, the Brahmins formed an exclusive social class with the privilege of being the centre of royal attention and patronage. Owing to their preoccupation with the spiritual and intellectual development of society, they would often pulsate with pride prejudice and contempt for other *varnas* and despised the village menials namely *Dombas* and *Candalas*, the humblest of all to the hilt, making the life socially miserable. Regarding themselves as a repository of knowledge and custodian of religion and embodiment of values, they utilized their intuitive faculties in weaving a web of communal mores around the society that eventually gained credence, stifling the development of other communities and thereby paving the way for tensions and bickering. The caste distinction, communal ego and occupational differentiation flourished much to the discomfort of the people, making the valley a stronghold of social stratification to sustain the ideological onslaught of Buddhism, a religion based on rational thinking and modest living.

Buddhism was introduced in Kashmir in 3rd Century B.C by Asoka² and became one of the most popular faiths of Kashmir. Buddhism in Kashmir entered its golden phase under the patronage of Kusanas especially King Kaniska. As a result, Kashmir became one of the most significant centers of Buddhist faith and practice. Many great Buddhist

Scholars resided in Kashmir during this period. Of these Kalhana mentions the name of Nagarjuna (founder of Madhyamik School of Buddhism) who resided at Sadarhadvana (Modern Harwan) ³. The Fourth World Buddhist Council was convened in Kashmir which shows the importance of Kashmir in the Buddhist faith. Kashmir was a seat of Buddhist learning attested by the visits of various Chinese Pilgrims to Kashmir in order to get the sacred Buddhist Scriptures. The intellectual legacy of Kashmiri scholars is attested by the Development of Mahayana and the spread of Buddhist Faith to China, Central Asia, Tibet and Java. Buddhism remained dominant faith in Kashmir even when it was on decline in other parts of India. After enjoying the status of a dominant faith for a period of about 1000 years, it declined and in 13th century A.D., it completely disappeared from Kashmir and became limited to Ladakh region where it still exists as the dominant faith.

How Buddhism overshadowed ancient religions of Kashmir and how in turn was overshadowed by the growth of Saivism a blend of traditional Hinduism lies at the core of the present study. Each and every religion leaves its impress on the various aspects of a society of a region. An attempt has been made to evaluate the impact of Buddhism on Kashmir. Finally an attempt has been made to trace the continuity of this influence on the present day Kashmiri society, keeping in view the basic premise that present is the outcome of past.

1.1 Sources:

The sources from which knowledge of the early history of Kashmir is derived may conveniently be divided into two broad categories, the rich collection of indigenous records, traditions and archaeological finds and to augment and corroborate these, the notices in foreign chronicles and

records of travelers. Among the indigenous sources Nilmatpurana, Kuttanimata kavya, Desopadesa, Narmamala, Lokapadesa, Samayamatrika, Vikramankadevacarita And the famous Rajtarangini are of extreme importance.

Nilmat Puran⁵ is one of the famous *puranas* that deals with the Valley of Kashmir in respect of its creation, its original inhabitants- Nagas, Pisachas and Brahmins, their style of living, religion, customs, festivals and topography. It peeps into the ancient history of Kashmir. It was written by some Kashmiri Brahmin between 6th and 7th A.D. In all there are 1453 verses in it. Some verses and parts thereof are missing with the passage of time. Kalhana the great historian of Kashmir has taken help from this document. Nilmat Puran is named after the King Nila of the Naga dynasty that ruled Kashmir in the beginning.

Kuttanimata Kavya was written by Jayapida's court poet in 772 A.D. It contains a vivid picture of the contemporary social and economic life of the Valley.

Desopadesa, Narmamala, Lokapadesa and Samayamatrika the works of Polyhistor Kshemendra who lived in 11th century A.D. Kalhana refers his lost work Nrapavali portraying the socio-political life of Kashmir of Kshemendra's time i.e.; in the reign of Queen Didda (979-1003 A.D). Out of these works Desopadesa caricatures the daily life of different sections of the people of the valley, such as cheats, misers, prostitutes, bawds, ostentatious, voluptuaries, students, degraded Saiva Gurus and so on⁶. The misrule and oppression prevalent in this time and earlier is depicted in his satirical poem Narmamla. Lokapadesa is a handbook which throws light on the life of the people and the prevailing administrative set up.

Samayamatrika throws considerable light on the prevailing conditions social and economic of Ancient Kashmir.

Vikramankadeva Carita of Bilhana is another source which gives a glowing picture of the Kashmir. It also helps to know the topography of Kashmir. Bilhana who left Kashmir in the reign of King Kalasa (1063-89 A.D) describes his rural home and its surroundings at the village of Khonamusha (Modern Khonmoh). It helps to peep in to the life of the countryside in ancient Kashmir. Simillar in character, though less ample in detail is the description of Kashmir and Pravapura(Srinagar), which Mankha, Kalhana's contemporary inserts in the third canto of his Srikanthacarita (1128-44 A.D).

And then there is the famous Rajtarangini written in Sanskrit verse by Kalhana Pandit in 1148-49 A.D. This is the only work in ancient Indian literature that may be regarded as a historical text in the true sense of the world. The author has not only taken great pains to collect his material from the existing chronicles and other sources but at the beginning of his work, he has set down a few general principles for witting history which are remarkably far in advance of his age. The Rajtarangini comprises in eight Cantos of Sanskrit verse the history of the various dynasties which ruled Kashmir from the earliest period down to the time of author. Allowing for the legendary character of some of the events mentioned in the first three Cantos, Kalhana's work still retains a connected account of Kashmir History. It was first translated in 15th century A.D in the reign of King Zain ul Abidin into Persian. Moorcraft obtained a copy of it in 1823 A.D which was translated by M.Troyer in French. Finally through the efforts of Dr. Buhler

such a text was found in Kashmir which formed the basis of Dr. Stein's monumental translation of the Chronicles published in 1900 A.D.

1.2 Foreign Accounts:

Among the foreign accounts, Ptolemy's Geography, and Herodotus' History are helpful in the reconstruction of topography of Ancient Kashmir. The most important and detailed account of Ancient Kashmir was recorded by the great Chinese Pilgrim Hieun Tsang who reached the Valley from Urusha(Hzara) in 631 A.D. and stayed for two years in Kashmir. He gives an accurate description of the routes, people agriculture, land, nature of king, his subjects, geographical limits and the current traditions about the origin of the Valley. His account is very important as he was the first to disclose the mystery of the Copper Plates buried by Kaniska after the conclusion of 4th Buddhist Council. From the perspective of the present study, his account is extremely important.

Another account of Ancient Kashmir and its people is furnished by Ou-Kong, the Chinese Pilgrim who visited Kashmir in 759 A.D. His description of the people though not as accurate as that of Hieun Tsang, is valuable in as much as it corroborates some statements made by Kalhana Pandit with regard to the foundation of Temples and Viharas.

Among the Muslim historians, the account of Al Biruni about the geography and political set up of Ancient Kashmir is noteworthy. Abul Fazl has also given considerable information about the origin, society, polity and economy of Kashmir in his Ain-i- Akbari.

I.3 Archaeological Sources:

Archaeological sources are of extreme importance for the reconstruction of Ancient Societies especially when there are less literary sources. Gen. Cunningham was the first archaeologist who surveyed the conspicuous temple ruins still existent and succeeded in identifying correctly a number of important ancient sites such as Purunadisthana, Jyestesvara, Martanda, Padmapura, Pattana, Khonamusa etc. during his short stay in the Valley in 1846 A.D. Later W.G Cowie and Major Henry Hardy Cole studied more temple ruins especially those left by Cunningham, took photographs and prepared illustrations of most of the ancient temple ruins and published them in 1870 A.D. With the establishment of the department of archaeology by the State Govt. towards the beginning of the 20th century, a program of preserving ancient sites and ruins was taken in hand and a museum was set up in Srinagar. Some excavations were undertaken notably at Awantipur, Ushkur and Martand. Under the supervision of Dr. Sahani in 1913-14 A.D. exquisite specimens of terracotta figures of the Gandhara Art were discovered at Ushkur and sculptures of a mixed Gandhara and Gupta schools of art at Awntipora and Verinag.

The most remarkable discovery was however made at Harwan where under the guidance of R.C.Kak, then superintendent of the Department; extensive excavations were undertaken in 1925 A.D. Foundations of old temples datable to 3rd-4th century A.D were unearthed as also a large courtyard of terracotta tiles bearing figures with representation of Central Asian features and dress. In 1942 A.D

excavations were undertaken at Tapar, 3.5 Km from Srinagar. The ruins of the base of a temple came to light and inscriptions in fragments were also found. Likewise excavations at Burzahama and Hutmur⁴ revealed data on prehistoric period of Kashmir.

Perhaps the most important source of Kashmir history is the people who inhabit this beautiful land. Their tradition, customs and manners, folklore, language, dress, food and other habits to which they have tenaciously held from ancient times present an open book of history.

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4. *Ibid* Book IV 475(Notes) and Book VI 77-79.
5. H.H Wilson (*The Hindu History of Kashmir*) page 128 states that the *Nilmat Puran* was narrated by Visamapayana, a pupil of Vyasa to King Janamejaya.
6. *Culture and Political History of Kashmir* Vol. I Page 48 & *Kashmir Rediscovered* Page 29.

Chapter 2

Ancient Kashmir- A Geopolitical profile

Jammu and Kashmir is the name given to the northernmost state of Indian Union which generally speaking stretches from the east of the river Indus to the west of river Ravi. Projecting deep into the heart of Asia, Jammu and Kashmir covers an area of 222,713 Square Kilometers, extending from 32°17' to 36°58'N and from 73°26' to 80°30'E. Conveniently called by the shorter term Kashmir and *Kasheer* by the natives, the state includes besides the valley the areas of Jammu, Ladakh, Baltistan, Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar. Area wise the state is the second largest state in the Republic of India. However the Pakistan aggression in 1947-48 A.D resulted in a considerable change to its actual area. At the cease-fire in 1949, 78932 Sq. Km of the state's territory remained under the illegal occupation of Pakistan. Another major change occurred when the People's Republic of China launched a massive attack on India in 1962 and forcibly occupied 37,555 Square Kilometers of the Indian Territory in Ladakh Division of the State. Later Pakistan transferred 5,180 Square Kilometers of State's territory under its illegal occupation to China.

With 11400, 370¹ inhabitants residing in the area on the Indian side, the state has the lowest density of population in India. For, unlike vast plains of the rest of the country, Kashmir is mostly mountainous, rising in several tiers from the plains in the south to the high altitude valleys and peaks in the North, enclosing some of the loftiest inhabited hamlets in the world. Obviously with such diversities of physical features, the state offers

interesting variations in its soil, elevation, geological formation, climate, vegetation and the people. This diversity in aspect apart from having influenced and largely shaped the history of the State is in itself an interesting study. By virtue of its central position in Asia, Kashmir commands strategic importance touching on the North West Afghanistan, on the North, the Sinkuing-Uighur Autonomous region of China and on the West Pakistan. It stands on the old Central Asian Trade Route and the Kashmir Valley has since ancient times, been the halting place of the Caravans traveling between the plains of India and high reaches of central Asia. The region experiences tropical heat. The celebrated valley of Kashmir nestled securely among the Himalayas at an average height of 1829metres above the sea is approximately 135 Km in length and 32 to 40 Km in breadth. North east and west range after range of mountains guard the valley from the outer world and in the south it is cut off from the Punjab by rocky barriers, 80 to 120 Km in width. The mountain snows feed the river Jhelum and the streams and it is calculated that the Jhelum in its course through the valley has a catchment area of nearly10, 240 Sq.Km.²Politically Ancient Kashmir was generally confined to its geographical limits. But at times it extended its influence beyond the boundary. According to Ptolemy (2nd A.D) *Kasperia* lay between the land of Darads and the land of the Kulindas on the Hyphasis and extended eastwards (Ptolemy vii, i, 42). When Hiuen Tsang visited the valley in the middle of the 7th century A.D, he found all adjacent territories on the west and south down to the plains under the sway of the king of Kashmir (Durlabhavardhana of Karkota Dynasty).He clearly records that Taksila to the east of the Indus, Urasa or Hazara, Simhapura or Salt Range with the smaller hill states of Rajpuri and Parnotsa were not independent, but

subject to Kashmir.³In the middle of the 8th century Lalitaditya conquered territories as far as Kanacy in the east and his grandson Jayapida is said to have had trials of strength with the rulers of Kanauj, Gauda and Nepal.Samkaravarman(A.D 883-902) annexed Darvabhisara and some parts of the Northern Punjab to the kingdom of Kashmir proper.Kalasa(A.D1063-1089)conquered the hilly state of Rajpuri and among the neighboring kingdoms which acknowledged his supremacy were Campa, Vallapura, Lohara, Urasa,Kada and Kasthavata if Rajtarangini of Kalhana Pandit is to be believed.⁴

2.1 Physical Features:

The characteristic physical features of Kashmir are its strong mountainous ramparts, its lovely lakes and rivers and its pale red Karewas. The valley of Kashmir is surrounded on all sides by a chain of mountain ranges which hasten away in wild confusion to the great Promontory of *Nanga Parbat* (26,182 feet). To the East rises *Harmukh* (16,903 feet) which guards the valley of Sindh. On the South is *Mahadeo* looking down upon Srinagar, the high range of *Gwash Brare* (17,321 feet) and the lofty peak of *Amarnath* (17,321 feet). The *Pir Pantsal* range with peaks of 15,000 feet or more stands on the South-West, over which the ancient trade route with Punjab lay. Further North is *Tosmaidan*(14,000 feet) and in the North-West rises the majestic *Kajinag*(12,125 feet).⁵

The surrounding mountain ranges have largely determined the political destiny of the valley, making it impregnable and inaccessible. While powerful neighboring kingdoms succumbed to the onslaught of the invaders, Kashmir's natural defenses saved her from impending foreign domination. Perhaps, it was not the valour of the Kashmiri army but the

defense furnished by the mountain ramparts which many a time turned the tide of invasion from the valley (Al Biruni has also attested to this fact in his Kitab-al-Hind). Guarded from the outer world by chains of mountains, she was able to preserve her ancient culture for a considerable time and develop her social and economic system in her own way.

The valley is dotted with numerous lakes that shine like gems under a sunlit sky, rivers with merry ripple to bear the bulk of Kashmir's trade. The latter also serve as very useful commercial waterways from a remote past. In fact in ancient times, there were few roads fit for wheeled traffic and communication with outer territories was restricted to difficult bridle-paths and tracks passable only to load carrying colliers. The rivers played an important role in the country's internal as well as external trade as most of it was carried by river ways. The position of the most of towns on river banks, shows the historical importance of riverine trade and traffic.⁶

The Udars or Karewas are names given to alluvial plateaus of Kashmir which according to most geologists were formed by lacustrine deposits. They range in height from 100 to 300 feet above the level of the ravines and valleys that intersect them and that are cut into twins by the swift flowing mountain streams rushing to the river Vitasta (Jhelum). The area covered by each Udar varies from 5 to 50 Square Miles. In ancient times when the population of the valley was probably much larger than the present⁷, the whole land was extensively cultivated to meet the food demand of such a large population. Consequently a very detailed arrangement had to be made for the proper irrigation of these Udars. Many of the irrigation channels which we find in the present day Kashmir are of ancient date. The chronicles also refer to some of the water courses

which were conducted over the Udars from the higher ground behind. A large number of Udars being isolated, water cannot be brought over them. Their productivity depends solely upon rainfall.

The Kingdom of Ancient Kashmir however was a territory much smaller than the modern state of Jammu and Kashmir. It denoted an irregularly oval valley, 84 miles long from the North-East to the South-West and 20 to 25 miles broad; between 33° to 34°35'N and 74°8' to 75°25'E. It was surrounded by snowcapped mountains varying at different points from 12,000 to 18,000 feet in height.⁸ According to Dr.S.C.Ray, the name of Kashmir does not occur in the Vedic literature. In Rig Vedic hymns mention is made of a river called Marudvrdha (Rig-Veda x, 755). Some scholars identify it with the small Kashmiri stream Maruwardwan which flows from north to south and joins the Chenab on its northern bank at Kishtwar and on the basis of this information conclude that the Aryans held a part at least of the secluded Vale of Kashmir.⁹

In Sanskrit literature, the earliest reference to Kashmir is found in Panini's Grammar and in Patanjali's great commentary on it. There the term *Kasmira* and its derivation *Kasmira* are stated as the name of the country and its inhabitants respectively. Mahabharata refers in several passages to the *Kasmiras* and their king but merely indicates that the valley was situated in hilly regions to the North of India.¹⁰ Similarly some of the Puranas refer to the *Kasmiras* in the list of northern nations¹¹. Varamahira (A.D 500) in his *Brahatsmhita* includes *Kasmiras* in the north eastern division.¹² Sri Harsa in his *Ratnavali* (7th A.D) refers to the saffron of the *Kasmira* country which according to him was the best of all types of saffrons. He says;

"Kasmiradesaje ksetra kumkumm yadbhaveddhi tat |

Susmakesaram araktam padmagandhi taduttamaam | |¹³

(In the land of Kashmir where beautiful Saffron grows, it is the best type, red colored with the fragrance of lotus)

The earliest note on Kashmir by foreigners occurs in the writings of Hecataeus who refer to *Kaspapyros*, the city the Gandarians. Herodotus mentions the city of *Kaspatyros* as the place at which embarked the expedition under Scylax of Koryanda sent by Darius to explore the courses of the Indus. Ptolemy (150 A.D) in his geographical account of India, refers to a region called *Kasperia* lying below the sources of the Bidaspes (Vitasta) and of the Sandabal (Candrabhega) and of the Adris (Iravati)(Geography vii,1,42). The first Chinese traveler to the valley of Kashmir was probably *Che-mong* who visited Kashmir shortly after 404 A.D. Fa-Yong, another Chinese traveler visited Kashmir for more than a year to study the Buddhist texts.¹⁴ A Chinese record dated A.D 541, describes the northern part of India as a country enveloped on all sides like a precious jewel by the snowy mountains with a valley in the south which leads up to it and serves as the gate of the kingdom.¹⁵ Certainly this is a distinct reference to the valley of Kashmir. Hieun Tsang who visited Kashmir in the year 631 A.D and stayed there for two years. His account of the land is full and accurate. His description of the kingdom of *kia-shi-mi-lo* shows that it included within its limits the great basin of the Vitasta and the side valleys drained by its tributaries above the Baramula defile. He observes that the valley is surrounded on all sides by mountains which have saved it from the onslaughts of the neighboring states. The land is said to have been fruitful and fertile and the climate cold with plenty of snowfall.¹⁶

The information that may be scrapped together from the Muslim writers on the historical geography of Kashmir is indeed scanty. According to the Al-Masudi it was a land with many towns and villages enclosed on all sides by mountains, through which led a single passage closed by a gate. This is practically everything that writers like Al- Qazwani, Al Idrisi and other Arab geographers tell us about Kashmir.¹⁷The only Arabic work which furnishes us with a very detailed and accurate account of the valley of Kashmir is Albiruni's Kitab-ul-Hind. Albiruni seems to have gathered most of his information about Kashmir during his long stay at Ghazna and in the Punjab between A.D 1017 and 1030. He was particularly interested about Kashmir because it was the seat of all Hindu Sciences at the time and he distinctly states that among his informants there were many Kashmiri scholars.¹⁸Al-Biruni correctly places Kashmir in that mountainous region which lies between the Central Asian watershed and the plains of Punjab .At that time the best known entrance to Kashmir from the west led through the central portion of Hazara to Manshera and then across the Kunhar(Kusnari) and Kisanganga (Mehwi) rivers to Muzaffarabad and then by the right of the Jhelum Valley to Baramulla. As one left the village of Uskur on the way, one reached the Adhithana i.e; the capital Srinagar. It stood on both the banks of the Jhelum joined by bridges and ferry boats. The area of the capital was about four *farsakh*.¹⁹

The courses of the river Jailam(Jhelum) have also been traced with much accuracy by the Arab Scholar. From the foot of the mountains, it was two days journey along the river to reach the capital. About four *farsakh* further from Adhithana, the river reached a large swamp. Al-Biruni mentions the fortress of Lohara, the Loharakotta of the Rajtarangini.²⁰The

Muslim scholar closes his chapter on the geography with an account of the Rajawari which is undoubtedly the town of Rajapuri, the capital of the hill state of Rajapuri mentioned in the chronicle. It was the farthest limit to which the Muslim traders of Al-Biruni's time could reach, and beyond which they never crossed.²¹

The last foreign writer of the period under study, who has left an account of Kashmir, is Marco Polo (1250 A.D). He mentions some of the habits and customs of the Kashmiris, their food and drink and of their physical features. Marco Polo states about the prosperous towns and villages, forests, deserts tracts and strong passes so that the people have no fear of anybody and keep their independence with a king of their own to rule and do justice. The Venetian traveler's evidence about the natural defenses of the valley receives corroboration from Al-Biruni and Ou-Kong as mentioned earlier. Marco Polo refers to a number of idolaters, abbeys and monestries²² which will be discussed in details in the forthcoming chapters.

The Indigenous literature of Kashmir throws a flood of light on the early geography and topography of the land. The earliest Sanskrit literature of the Valley, so far known is the Nilmat Puran. Let me quote the words of Buhler, "it is a real mine of information regarding the sacred places of Kashmir and their legends."²³ Besides the reference to the legendary origin of the country and the rites and worships prescribed by Nila and observed by the people, the work dilates upon such various topics as the principal Nagas or Sacred springs of Kashmir, the origin of the Vular Lake, the places consecrated to Siva and Vishnu, the sacred river

confluences and lakes, the chief tirthas of the land and in the end upon the sanctity of the river Vitasta".²⁴

Ksemendra, the polyhistor, in his *Samayamatrika* furnishes us with some useful information about the topographical details of his country. To him we owe the first reference to the Pir Pantsal route (Pancaladhara).²⁵ After Ksemendra, came Somadeva, the author of the *Kathasaritasagara*. He describes Kashmir as a region in the south of the Himalyas washed by the waters of the Vitasta. He mentions some of the holy sites of the valley such as the Vijayaksetra, Namdiksetra, Varahaksetra, Mandapaksetra and Uttaramammanasa and the town of Hiranyapura.²⁶

Bilhana who lived during the reigns of Kalasa and Harsa (1063-89 A.D) has also left an account of his native valley. In the last chapter of his poem, the *Vikramankadevacarita*, he gives us a vivid picture of the Kashmiri Capital and the Village of Khanmusa, where he was born. His account, apart from its poetical beauties, is full of local details.²⁷ For the history as well as for the early geography of the valley; Kalhana's chronicle is a very important document. In the first book of his work, he gives us an account of the legends relating to the creation of Kashmir and its sacred river, the Vitasta and refers besides to the most famous of the many *tirthas* in which Kashmir was abundant, the abode of sages.²⁸

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2.1 Society, Polity and Economy:

Born in the womb of Sati Sar, a vast lake which through an incessant process of geographical transformation witnessed drain of its waters by the deepening of the Baramulla gorge, Kashmir developed its own socio-economic system in an environment that was adequately suited for the mobilization of the earliest hunting and gathering herds with primitive beliefs and rituals. This system was very simple conveniently comparable to those of earliest hunting gathering tribes obtaining at various places in the world and it continued to influence Kashmir's early organizational patterns till the advent of agriculture and domestication of animals which eventually made the valley a conglomeration of village communities with a familial orientation.¹ Essentially self-sufficient, these village communities had to shape their own organizational and institutional settings with capacities required to sustain these against the vagaries of time, and to flourish as a necessary framework for the emergence of Kashmir as a crossroad of civilizations. These institutions shaped the destiny of the Kashmir and eventually enabled them to carve out for themselves a social structure based upon ethnic ties, besides politics, economics and religion.² The village household version of early Kashmir was inherently uncurled and unsophisticated.³ Its undifferentiated social order persuaded villagers to pursue multiple activities as subsidiary to agriculture and fashioned their beliefs, rituals, fears and superstitions that laid the basis for the formation of early religion of Kashmir. Since agriculture was pervasively dominant in the communities other activities indulging religion were subordinate to it. The goods for local use were produced in the households⁴ and shared commonly through barter system carried in

festivals and fairs annually held in the villages which besides providing entertainment to the participating villagers fulfilled their religious urges and susceptibilities ⁵In such pursuits, the state interference was not in the least.

It was with the effective distribution of water resources to facilitate the regular irrigation of fertile lands that the role of the state became more pronounced but least complex.⁶The State's responsibilities enlarged manifold in course of time in response to a notable increase in population and concomitant increase in the size of communities.⁷The State played a significant role in bringing about integration of communities by arbitrating their mutual disputes arising out of sharing of common sources of water which had come under cloud due to gradual population explosion. Besides regulating the irrigation system and harmonizing the village communities with each other to form a common front Vis-a -Vis outside world, the state symbolized the realm of culture and religion built upon shared commitment to community service and the worship of forces of nature.⁸Priests who presided over the worship, governed the state affairs. These priests who were also chiefs provided cultural, political and religious bases of the society and the most assiduous among them was assigned the authority of controlling these affairs.⁹

Genesis of this state with its territorial, social, political and administrative dimensions is traced in the 6th century A.D literary source, the *Nilmatpuran* which refers to the process of reclamation of Kashmir from the waters of Gigantic Lake (Sati) to accommodate the first settlement of the Nagas under their patriarchal chief, Nila. Intrinsically of mythological value, highlighting the teachings of Nila and his

achievements, a hero of the oppressed Nagas, this source narrates his resounding triumph over his rival, *Jalodhbhave* and his accession to the throne of newly formed state. Nila, the first potentate and chief, established a splendid court with all the rituals and customs that were necessary for its sustenance and enunciated expedients of State-policy that echoed the milieu of the times. Unfolding the level of his intellectual attainments and his organizing capabilities, this State policy assiduously cultivated the support of his constituents and resulted in coalescing various social elements under the unified command of Nila, the first Monarch of Kashmir.¹⁰

During the centuries succeeding the reign of King Nila the State came to acquire a reputation for its maturity, confidence and Magnanimity, reflecting itself in various departments that developed as its vital limbs to meet the requirements of the times in best possible manner. For their smooth functioning and bearing full responsibilities of the state to ensure the welfare of the people together with their social configuration and consolidation, these departments worked under certain procedures and principles and coordination as depicted in the ancient literary works of Kashmir.¹¹ From the writings of these early writers, it is conveniently gathered that the state was a beneficent institution that came into existence mainly for the protection of human life and for the better realization of its higher ideals, through a network of its limbs, which are territory, population, king, ministers, army and treasury. The prosperity of this state entirely depended upon the cooperation and coordination of its components.¹² Thus the state in Kashmir came into being as a result of interaction of socio-economic forces and its expansion was necessitated

by the ever increasing population and resultant growth of village communities and urbanization that eventually added to its responsibilities, making the institution a complex grandiose version of a federation of cities towns and villages under the control of a ruler.¹³

The kingship as it developed in Kashmir attained a royal aura and dignity firmly placed within the domain of kingdom which drew its strength from palace administrators, servants and soldiers, besides religious leaders. These functionaries assisted the king in ensuring the prosperity of his subjects and in upholding peace against chaos throughout his kingdom. The magnificence, luster, pomp and splendor of kingship are clearly manifested in historical literature produced by Kalhana, the illustrious poet historian of Kashmir. Unlike others he did not subscribe to the mythical view of its origin. Instead he believed in subtle interplay of cosmic and socio-economic forces that paved the way for the fulfillment of an individual's personality and obligation of *raja* to achieve the welfare of his subjects.¹⁴

Analyzing various aspects and reasons that contributed to subsequent events of rulers abuse of this institution, Kalhana suggested some remedial measures to guard it against the growing tendency of acquiring overbearing attitude. In his own words the purpose of his writing was to furnish a medicine to those kings who became either overbearing in the glories of their administrations or grieved at the adversity of the time.¹⁵ Another notable writer, Ksemendra went a step further. He like Kautilya prescribed proper and formal education in philosophy and through training in the administration for kings to make the institution more responsive to the needs of their subjects. The cultivation of spotless, intellect through the study of philosophy and other allied subjects was thus

an important feature of this institution in addition to truthfulness, valour and liberality.¹⁶

It will be too naive to presume that the vast upheavals attendant upon the gradual and systematic spurt in urbanization negatively affected the village communities, or stalled their growth or pushed these across wilderness to face extinction or temporary disappearance from the scene. These communities as a matter of fact, continued growing in numbers as the key components of the new change providing it with the winning streaks of strength and vitality which eventually placed it on sound basis to flourish more vibrantly as the very soul of ancient Kashmir with far reaching ramifications. Numerous references contained in the historical literature point to the uninterrupted growth of villages called *Tapas* whose number rose to about 400,000.¹⁷ Most of the kings of the antiquity are credited with the founding of new villages with arrangements to guard these against the onslaughts of sedentary life style. They imposed relatively reasonable restrictions on the migration of villagers to towns and cities and prohibited them to abandon village household occupations. King Lalitaditya even discouraged them to accumulate wealth.¹⁸ Contemplating that the surplus wealth, ornaments, sophisticated clothes, woolen blankets, horses and houses as were fit for the cities and towns would induce them to ignore agriculture, the king initiated novel measures to solicit total absorption of villagers in tilling, cultivation and rearing cattle.¹⁹ Their worldly possessions were not to exceed a few oxen, mud huts, wooden pestles and mortar for husking paddy and a few earthen pots.²⁰ Under these circumstances the rural urban divide intensified. The increasing ruralisation became unavoidable

to sustain sedentarization and to fulfill the needs of consumers who had segregated from principal producers. The pressure of this social whirl and divide also necessitated some degree of decentralization of authority to administer and maintain communications across territories. Governors, administrators and other functionaries were assigned this job, they became a vehicle of the kingship, who were the most influential people between the king and his subjects.²¹ They strengthened the hands of the king who in turn assigned villages to them as *agraharas* or benefices.²² This was an important development much before Emperor Asoka extended his suzerainty over Kashmir, and the foremost ruler who patronized the practice of granting villages to influential people was king Lava.²³ The practice became wide spread with the passage of time adding a new dimension to property relations and social interaction that manifested itself in private property title in land.

A variety of these activities ushered in a reasonable pattern of social relations and a set of mental constructs expressing themselves on the growth of healthy competition, social conflict and slow migration. These trends did not of course occur all at once but through gradual and cumulative process shaking marginally the delicate equilibrium. The comforts of the urban life induced villagers to migrate to cities which created artificial social demographic barriers.²⁴ The conflict and confrontation between city and peripheral areas became more frequent, besetting the society by incompatible visions of life and conflicting concepts of cosmos. However, these conflicts did not assume the alarming proportions of civil wars, as they did in subsequent centuries, owing to the inherent conflict resolution system available with the society.

Common religious beliefs, allegiance to political authority and the customs weighed heavily against discord marking the growth of collective identity, transcending the urban rural divide- that continues to account for the marked individuality of the Kashmiri's and their historical existence amidst their well-preserved traditions and extra-ordinary geo-physical setting of their land. However with the passage of time social dichotomy and rural-urban divide appeared to create noises and play a chord that, though sounding divisive, was potentially important to keep the socio-political life in motion. The ever increasing urbanization slowly and gradually excited enormous appetite among the people for a sedentary life-style and occupational identity formation created an environment that sharpened the greed of influential section of society for worldly possessions and fortunes of life. In the ensuing race for accumulation of wealth and its attendant luster and power, the members of royalty, army, soldiery, official and priestly classes were in the forefront, relentlessly striving after riches and conspicuous consumption. Through their machinations, they succeeded in finding out a niche for themselves to live most prosperously to the detriment of the weaker sections of the society and in the process became influential enough to meddle in the affairs of the State to the discomfiture of monarchy.

The pomp and show that accompanied the life style of influential people, particularly members of royal household, and the distinctive atmosphere of grandiose that surrounded their fortified castles and palaces²⁵, raised in the hearts of cities on the banks of River Jhelum and the pomp of their women aroused a storm of public indignation which is very aptly displayed in the writings of early writers of Kashmir, especially

Kalhana and Ksemendra. Hitting hardly and indignantly at the vices of officials or *kayasthas* of the State, Kalhana has detailed their corrupt practices and money grubbing attitude with remarkable frankness and without any fear. He laments the decline in their character and portrays them as people who are deceitful by nature and far superior to a poisoned arrow. He censures them for their viciousness, greed and hypocrisy and warns common people to refrain from their company as they were more dangerous than disease like cholera, rapidly destroying everybody.²⁶ Likewise; he condemns the unjust means of moneymaking very frequently adopted by the priests or *purohitas* who were held in low estimation for their cheapness, nasty behavior and demon like character. Kalhana explores the cloak of *auri sacra fames*, they wore to hide their viciousness and to disguise themselves heavily in order to camouflage their real intentions, with bitter sarcasm.²⁷ The desire for wealth had gone into their heads so excessively that they did not even hesitate to manipulate religion for gratifying their lust for fortune and for protecting their vested interests. With their crafty maneuverings they organized themselves into corporations or *parsads* at the important places of the worship and pilgrimage to shield their interests against any encroachment, and often exploited religious fasts or *prayopavesas* in full public view to their advantage. To these fasts they often resorted as a formidable means of coercing the authorities into considering their unjust demands with favour.²⁸ Equally troublesome and mischievous were the military class, *Tantrins*²⁹ and *Ekangas*³⁰, who served as foot soldiers and royal guards and the merchants *Lavanyas*³¹ who left no stone unturned to add to their riches by foul means and by manipulating political situations and by supporting one faction against the other. Another class of trouble

makers was constituted by the *Damaras*³² whose pillaging activities perpetuated the social conflict and widened the orders of cultural divide thrusting people into a social whirl characterized by the feelings of disenchantment and divisiveness to increase their wealth and power and to grace their palaces with comfort and plenty they continued with their looting and plundering ventures bringing untold miseries to people.

Thus the gradual spread of these splinter social groups as powerful and wealthy section of society for the purpose of pandering to their pleasures in their fortified mansions where from they scoured the valley for plunder, plagued the country afflicting the people with malice for each other. The resultant menace of antagonism bickering and disenchantment affected the economy so badly that the chances of employment were considerably reduced for the weaker sections of society, leaving them with no choice but either to die of starvation or resort to begging robbery or prostitution.³³

The ethnic anarchy that surrounded Kashmir during this period is vividly portrayed in Nilmat Puran.³⁴Which also reflects King Nila's commitment to his self, his community and his religion and to the rationale and vision behind his Politico-religious thought and outlook that he made good use of in overcoming his tensions and obstacles. It also refers to his institution of patriarchal joint family that he established to strengthen the political and religious structures of his kingdom and to tickle his own ethnic vanity.³⁵Accommodating several hundred persons under one roof, the joint family was created to give wide powers to its patriarch, Nila who in return promised to ensure the protection of its members and to safeguard their

honour and dignity against any infringement. With the expansion of joint family into a federation of several natural families, Nila appointed the senior members of the senior most families as heads of the villages they settled in and entrusted them with the functions of administering civil and criminal justice and collecting taxes and other dues with the obligation to come to the assistance of their patriarch when required.³⁶For immigrants separate code was issued to be followed by them.³⁷Some literary texts, notably Kuttanimata, indicate that even women were made chieftains of petty villages and given patronage to control these with the effective help of officials and army, of course they were kith and kin of the Patriarch.³⁸Kalhana also sheds some light on kinsmen who accompanied kings alongside the ministers. King Avantivarman is depicted sharing his power with his kinsmen who are believed to have been setup as petty chieftains of various territorial units into which the kingdom was divided for administrative convenience.³⁹Evidently a number of families descending from a common ancestor, thus constituted a village and several such villages made a tribe and a territorial unit which accommodated incoming settlers as well. The state or kingdom founded by Nila was thus a conglomerate of these villages and tribes .Its social, political and religious structure was based on the theory of *dharma* and *karma*, the most significant aspects of Hinduism.⁴⁰The Nilmat Puran and the other literary sources have commended the combination and blending of temporal with religious functions by the state. The king is shown holding the priestly office as well, giving sermons and imploring his subjects to abide by his instructions- a mixture of religious and political ideas duly sanctified by the Hindu religion.⁴¹

It was more viable for the kings to ensure peace and prosperity to their kingdoms through the medium of religion than that of the political manipulations and of course, it proved an effective device to secure the obedience and allegiance of the people to the commands of the state and respect for its authority and dignity. That is probably why that the kings often constructed temples or repaired the old and damaged ones. This religious orientation of the state affairs preserved the stability of society which has assumed a heterogeneous character owing to the settlement of outsiders in Kashmir. These outsiders were to abide by the rules and regulations envisaged in the code devised by the King Nila especially for them as mentioned earlier, which augmented heterogeneity of the society, creating a pattern of relationships that stimulated delicate nuances of social distinction and diversity as signified by *varnas* or caste system. In this system the Brahmans formed an exclusive social class with the privilege of being the centre of royal attention and patronage. Owing to preoccupation with the spiritual and intellectual development of the society, they would often pulsate with pride, prejudice and contempt for other *varnas* and despised the village-menials, the *Dombas* and the scavengers (*Candalas*) the humblest of all, to the hilt, making their life socially miserable.⁴² Regarding themselves as a repository of knowledge and custodian of religion and embodiment of values, they utilized their intuitive faculties in weaving a web of communal mores around the society that eventually gained credence, stifling the development of other communities and thereby paving the way for tensions and bickering. On the other hand women, an integral part of the society were also extremely oppressed except those of the high profile ones. Though Damodargupta's *Kuttaamumatta Kavya* glorifies them

having mastery over dance, music various arts and Natyashastra of Bharata.⁴³ This can be true of the ladies of the royal families. But on the other hand, the custom of Sati⁴⁴ which was highly prevalent along with the institution of the prostitution,⁴⁵ which depicts the general condition of the women at that period.

With the foreword movement of the state and society on the subsequent centuries the caste distinction, communal ego, occupational differentiation and gender bias flourished much to the discomfort of the people, making the valley a stronghold of social stratification to sustain the ideological onslaught of Buddhism, a religion based on rational thinking and modest living, which will be discussed in the coming chapters.

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Chapter 3

Religions of Ancient Kashmir

According to Karen Armstrong, human beings are spiritual animals. Indeed there is a cause for arguing that *Homo sapiens* is also *Homo religious*. Men and women started to worship gods as soon as they became recognizably human; they created religions at the same time as they created works of Art.¹ In the same manner in case of Ancient Kashmir. The earliest religion of Kashmir (Naga Worship) had a close relationship with the legendry origin of Kashmir. The earliest inhabitants of Kashmir had probably cherished some aboriginal belief, but so far no traces of their form of worship etc. have been found. The snake-cult or Naga Worship seems to have been established in the valley from a remote period and undoubtedly had been one of the earliest religions of the land. We find that before the Indo-Aryan immigration, the prominent cult was animism manifested by Naga or Snake worship which has not ceased even till now and which is manifested in the respect and sanctity that is attached to Nagas or springs in the valley. The long account of Nagas given in the Nilmat Puran, the numerous temples built near the more famous springs, and the popularity and undoubtedly ancient origin of the pilgrimages directed to the latter show the deep seated belief in Naga Worship among the people of the valley.

3.1 Naga-Cult:

The word Naga comes from the Sanskrit and *Naga* is still the word for snake in most of the languages of India. It is a term used for unseen beings associated with water and fluid energy and also with persons having powerful animal like qualities or conversely an impressive animal with human qualities. In myths, legends, scripture and folklore, the category *naga* comprises all kinds of serpentine beings. All Nagas are considered the offspring's of the Rishi or Sage Kasyapa, the son of Marichi. According to Nilmat Puran, the ancient Kashmir was a vast inland lake formed of the waters from the melting snow on the high mountain peaks surrounding it. The gorge through which the river Vitasta at present escapes near Baramulla was then blocked up, and the whole valley filled with what must have been the most lovely lake in the world. According to Nilmat Puran, this lake was called Sati Sar², the lake of Sati.³ In the period of the seventh Manu the demon Jalodhbhava (water-borne) who resided in the lake caused great distress to all neighboring regions by his devastations. The sage Kasyapa, (whom I mentioned above) while on his pilgrimage in the North of India heard of the cause of this distress from his son Nila, the king of the Kashmir's Nagas. After performing penance for a long time, the saint was blessed and he was able to cut the mountain near Varahmula (Modern Baramulla). The lake was drained, the land appeared and the demon was killed. The saint encouraged people from India to settle in the valley. Hence there are the reasons to believe that Naga Worship may have been the principal religion in the Ancient Kashmir. Regarding the exact date when the snake-cult was prevalent in the land, we do not have any authentic source. In the *Mahavamsa*, it is said that Asoka's advisor Moggaliputta Tisa sent Majjhantika to preach Buddhism in

Kashmir, when the *sramana* reached the valley; he found that Aravala, the king of the Nagas was ruling over it.⁴

The famous Chinese pilgrim who visited Kashmir in the 7th Century A.D., Hieun Tsang relates that according to the native records Kashmir was originally a *dragon lake* ⁵. The Naga worship prevailed in early Kashmir receives confirmation from the native literatures also. The Nilmat Purana, probably a work of the 7th or 8th century records at great length how Kashmir was created out of water and left to the care of the Nagas, as mentioned earlier. Ferguson mentions that a century before Christ, king Damodara as per Rajtarangini was converted into a snake because he offended some Brahmin, and also mentions many Naga kings.⁶ Most of the rites prescribed in the Nilmat purana are concerned with the nature of worship of popular deities. But there are some festivals which are particularly connected with the worship of Nagas. Thus Nila, the lord of the Nagas was worshiped on the festival of the first snowfall. He and other Nagas were also propitiated on *Amanjaripuja* which took place in the month of *Chaitra* (April) Another ceremony called *vasunapanchimi* was held on the fifth day of Bhadra (July-August) and was connected with the worship of Nagas. The Nilmatpurana also records the names of the principal Nagas worshiped in Kashmir, about 527 in number. From a remote period great importance must have been attached to the worship of the Nagas as is shown by the long account of them given in the *Nilmatpurana* .A large number of temples were built near springs and were dedicated to the worship of Nagas⁷ and these places have become great centers of religious pilgrimage. The place names of certain areas e.g., Verinag, Anantnag and Sheshnag even today remind one of

the intimate relations between the valley and the popularity of Naga cult. The Rajtarangini of Kalhana mentions Sushravas and Padma Nagas, who were tutelary deities connected with the Vular Lake. The Dikpalas of Kashmir are believed to be four Nagas, Bindusara in the East, Srimadaka in the South, Elapatra in the west and Uttarmansa in the north⁸. The *purana* also points to the association of the cult of Nagas with that of Shiva. In the Mahabharata and Harivamsa texts, Shesha was considered the son of Shiva. A lesser relation was developed with regard to Vishnu as in his Sheshashaji form which links the primal waters with the sleeping Vishnu. Also Balrama, Krishna's elder brother is the personification of the snake Ananta. That the Naga cult was prevalent in the whole Hindu period as well as afterwards is attested by the account of Abul Fazl. He mentions that during the period of Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.) there were 45 places dedicated to Shiva, 64 to Vishnu, 3 to Brahma and 22 to Durga, but there were 700 places in the valley where there were carved images of snakes which the inhabitants worshiped ⁹.

There is certainly a continuity of the said cult in the modern Kashmir as one finds many things in modern Kashmir which depicts the impression of the earliest religion till now. First of all, the valley is named Kashmir after *Kashyapa* who has been mentioned above. The term *naga* stands for spring, *cheshmah* and *negin* for small spring. Springs are the main source of water in Kashmir. Interestingly the auspicious and famous river of Kashmir, the Vitasta (Jhelum) originates from a spring *vering* and is important for the water supply to most parts of the valley. The religious significance of the river is established by the Nilmat Purana when it

records the entire land of Kashmir as the material manifestation of Uma and describes her as the divine form of the Vitasta.¹⁰

According to Nilmat Purana, Nagas were supposed to reside in the lakes and springs of the Valley. B. Malla in his *water resources and their management in Kashmir state* on this basis that every *naga* has a snake as its guardian deity, states that is the reason why fishing is prohibited in these springs. Such restriction has definitely helped to some extent to preserve water ecology. Hindus still propitiate these *nagas*. At Martand (modern. Mattan in Anantnag District) even *srada* is performed, water is offered by Hindus to the Sun God and to their ancestors. Likewise before having *Darshan* of the Shiva *linga* (snow *linga*) at *Amarnatha*, a holy dip is essential in the *Sheshnag*. A person suffering from a skin disease is said to be cured after having a bath in Gandhak Naag at Nagbal (Anantnag).

3.2 Hinduism:

If the religious beliefs of the kings and royal families be regarded as fair index of the popularity of a religion, Hinduism must have been the predominant religion in Kashmir long before Buddhism was introduced there. We can trace the Hinduism in Kashmir right from its origin. According to Nilmatpurana¹², the Satisar (the name given to the lake which initially the valley of Kashmir was) was drained by the Prajapati Kashyapa¹³ with the help of the Brahmanic gods Druhiva, Upendra, Rudra and other gods. According to P.N.K. Bamzai, referring to the same Nilmat purana, the Satisra was abode of the Demon Jalodhabava who carried great distress to all neighbouring regions by his devastations. The sage Kashyapa, determined to punish the evil-doer, proceeded to Brahma to implore his

and other evil-doer, proceeded to Brahma to implore his and other gods help for this purpose. His prayer was granted. All the gods by Brahmas command started for *satisar* and took up their positions on the lofty peaks above Kaunsarnag. The demon that was invincible in his own element refused to come forth from the lake. Vishnu thereupon called on his brother, Balabhadra to drain the lake which he did by piecing the mountain with his ploughshare. When the lake had dried up Jalodhbhava was attacked by Vishnu and after a fierce combat was slain with his war disk (Vishnu Chakra). According to Virendra Grover, when the Kashyapa practised penance for a long time the Gods Druhiva, Upendra and Rudra felt compassion for him. At last the goddess Sharika moved by pity appeared in the form of a sparrow carrying in her beak a pebble which she threw down upon the wicked demon. That pebble is the Hari-Parbat of today, the Olympus of Hindus and the Bastille of Kashmir.¹⁴

Kalhana mentions the existence of the temples dedicated to Shiva, like *Vijayes* and *Bhutesa* even in pre Asokan days. He also records the foundation of the temples of Siva Asokeswara by Asoka when he visited the valley. He also repaired the grand Vijayeswara temple of Siva at Vijayeswara (Modern Bijbehara). Belief in attaining spiritual merit by consecration of a large number of Siva lingas seems to have been common during the early period of Kashmir history.¹⁵ Likewise the worship of Vishnu was also popular which received royal patronage under the Karkota rule. Besides Siva and Vishnu, there seems to have been a universal faith in the usual Hindu gods particularly Ganesa, Skanda and Surya. According to Kalhana an image of *Vinayaka Bhimbaswamin* existed in Kashmir as early as the days of Prevarasena II. The shrine has been

identified with the temple of the Svayambu (self-made) image of Ganesa at the South-East spur of Hari Parbat hill in Srinagar. Stone images of Ganesa have been found in almost all the temple ruins in the valley. According to Nilmat Purana, the eighth of the dark fortnight of Asada (June) was dedicated to the worship of Ganesa and went by the name of Vinayaka Astami. The worship of the Sun seems to have been brought by the immigrants to Kashmir. The famous temple of Martand near the sacred spring and shrine of Bavan was dedicated to sun god by Lalitaditya, but the most popular and universally respected shrines were those of goddess Durga in her various forms of Sharika Raginia, Sarada, Jwala, Kali and Varahi. In the numerous springs, temples, hills and rocks still respected and worshipped in the valley, we find the memory of their popularity in ancient Kashmir. We also find images of the goddess Lakshmi and Saraswati and along with the worship of Visnu, there are found a prominent place among the goddesses worshiped by the people of ancient Kashmir.

3.3 Rise of Buddhism:

The excesses of Brahmanic cult in the later Vedic period led to a sort of intellectual revolt by those people, mostly non-Brahmans, who could not participate in these sacrifices. From the *Dighanikaya* we know that the people shed tears when they were forced to kill animals for sacrifices, cut vast fields of grass to obtain the sacrificial *darbha* grass, and denude forests in the search of *Yupas* (the sacrificial posts to which animals intended for sacrifice were tied).¹⁷ The *sramanas* had no faith in the efficacy of these costly sacrifices. The *Ksatriyas* became the leaders of this intellectual revolt which culminated in the religious movements of Jainism

and Buddhism. Though Scholars like Prof.G.C. Pande and Dr. Lal Mani Joshi, the main Source of Rise of Buddhism was the *Sramanism*. Dr.L.M. Joshi has traced the Origin of Buddhism in great antiquity beyond the arrival of Aryans in the Sramanic stream of thought. He has even traced the presence of Sramanic thoughts in the Harrapan Culture as depicted by the archaeological remains. He negates the influence of Upanishadic Philosophy in the rise of Buddhism on the grounds of dating as he argues that the Upanishads were later compiled. This view has been refuted in the very next chapter by the view of Prof. G.C Pandes who holds while the Sramanic concept of Samsara did had an impact in shaping Buddha, at the same time the Upanishadic concept of Brahman did had its due share in the attainment of Enlighten by Buddha. It means that the amalgamation of Sramanic Samsara and the Upanishadic view of Brahman simultaneously led to the making of Gautama as Buddha.†

Gautama Buddha was distressed by the spectacle of human suffering in this world. He left his royal palace to find out the cause of suffering in this world, and discovered the four noble truths (*Arya satyani*):

- (i) That there was suffering in this world (*duhkha*)
- (ii) That desire (*trsna*) was the cause of suffering
- (iii) That it was possible to make an end of suffering (*nirodha*)
- (iv) That there was a way to end suffering namely the noble eight fold path (*arya astangika marga*) consisting of right views, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindful-ness and concentration.

This was the first teaching of Gautama Buddha which he preached to the five Brahmanas, who had deserted him after he had taken solid food, rice and sour milk and were living at Sarnatha near Varanasi. This is called Dharma-Cakra-Pravartana-Sutra as it marked the beginning of the propagation of his religious views. The Buddha also discovered the law of causation or the law of dependent origination (Pratitya Samutpada). According to this law nothing is unconditional. As the existence of every event depends on some conditions there must be something which brings misery into existence. Life's sufferings are there because there is birth. Birth again has its condition. It is the will to become which causes our birth. Our mental clinging to the objects of the world is responsible for our desire to be born. This clinging is due to our craving to enjoy object-sights, sound etc. Previous sense experience tinged with some pleasant feelings is the cause of our craving. The *craving* arises because of the contact of sense organs with objects. This contact would not arise had there not been the sense organs the five senses and mind. These six depend for their existence on the body mind organism which constitutes the perceptible being of man. This organism is only the effect of the impressions of our past existence. If the transitory, painful nature of the worldly existence were perfectly realized there would not arise any Karma resulting in the rebirth. Ignorance of four noble truths is therefore the root cause of impression or tendencies that cause rebirth.

† *Buddhism*, Prof. G.C. Pande and Dr. L.M. Joshi Punjabi University Patiala (INDIA) August, 1969

The object of Buddhist life is to attain emancipation from the bondage of ignorance and Karma. According to the Buddhist conception worldly things possess three cardinal characteristics:

- (i) They are transient or impermanent (*anitya*)
- (ii) They are inseparable from suffering (*duhkha*)
- (iii) They never contain anything which can be called one's own (*anatma*).

According to the Hindus Atman (soul) and *Paramatman* (the higher soul) are not subject to these three characteristics mentioned above. The Buddhists do not accept this position. The Buddha taught us to pursue *prajna* (knowledge) and practice *Karuna* (compassion). He aimed at a new spiritual existence attained through *Jnana* (knowledge of the reality) and *bhakti* (devotion). He himself said that, "I deem the highest goal of a man to be the stage in which there is neither old age, no fear, nor disease, nor birth, nor death, nor anxieties and in which there is no continuous renewal of activity"¹⁸ He aimed at a spiritual experience in which all selfish craving is extinct and with it every fear and passion. According to Buddha our aim is to conquer time, overcome *samsara* (a stream where the law of Karma functions) and the way to it is the moral path which results in illumination. When the individual knows that what is impermanent is painful, he becomes detached from them and becomes free.

Though it is difficult to define *nirvana*, it means freedom from the cycles of birth and deaths. It is a guarantee that rebirth will not occur because the conditions which result in the rebirth have been destroyed. One who has attained *nirvana* enjoys perfect peace even in this life, so

long as he lives after enlightenment. According to Buddha, the law of change is universal neither man nor any other being, animate or inanimate is exempt from it. The Buddha denies the existence of soul, but life according to him is an unbroken series of states, each of these depends on the condition just preceding it and gives rise to one just succeeding it.

There are two sides of the life of Buddha-the individual and the social. The individual Buddha as conceived by the Hinayana school, was a meditating sage absorbed and withdrawn lost in joy of his inner meditation. For them Buddha was a man not God, a teacher not a savior. The social side of the Buddha can be seen in the concept of the Mahayana School. According to this school, he was concerned with the sorrows of men, eager to heal their troubles and spread his message of good of many. This concept of the Buddha based on his compassion for humanity developed the ideal of universal service. Thus Buddhism of individual emancipation (Hinayama) became the Buddhism of universal salvation by faith (Mahayana). Presently the Hinayana tradition prevails in Ceylon, Burma and Thailand while the Mahayana tradition is found in Nepal, Tibet, Korea, China and Japan.

In the Hinayana, the Buddha is worshiped as the divine. He is to be adored as the savior of man through the truth which he exemplified in his life. In the Mahayana, the early Buddha is a form of the eternal Buddha who reveals himself in all the worlds. Gautama Sakyamuni is an earthly incarnation of the Eternal Buddha who exists in countless worlds. From the concept the Mahayanists developed the *Trikaya theory*. Sakyamuni is the *Nirmanakaya* (possessing an earthly body) of the eternal Buddha.

Sambhogakaya is the manifestation of the eternal Buddha for the benefit of all Bodhisattvas (a being destined to develop into a Buddha) the *Dharmakaya* is the permanent, undifferentiated, all comprehending truth. It is the ultimate reality. It is the true Buddha. The Hinayanist's relied more on personal effort at good living as the way to salvation. This sect holds that the experience of enlightenment which was realized by the Buddha is attainable by other individuals if they follow the path in his footsteps. Every individual has in him the possibility of becoming an *arhat* (one who is superior to time and has conquered the world), the Mahayana adopts the ideal of Bodhisattva, who though, he has attained release, out of concern and love of mankind lives in the world where he may serve men by bestowing hope and guiding their steps. The Mahayana preaches universal salvation. The great difference between the *Arhat* and Bodhisattva is that the former is intent upon his own enlightenment and liberation while the latter wishes to help all creatures and bring them to full enlightenment. The Mahayanists began to worship the images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and relied more on the worship of the Buddha as a means of salvation. In the Mahayana school faith took the place of reason, and devotional worship and thus replaced self-effort.

The canonical texts of Hinayana school were all written in Pali while those of Mahayana school were written in Sanskrit.

The main schools of Buddhist philosophy are:

- (1) **Sunyavada** : Nagarjuna (1st A.D.) who was a contemporary of Kanisha, Propounded the theory of relativity and called it Sunyaveda. He considered the world from the point of view of

absolute truth as Sunya i.e., devoid of an inherently persisting reality, being subject to change and dependent upon other causal factors. His school is called Madhyamika because it teaches the middle doctrine where existence and nonexistence have only relative truth and true wisdom is the knowledge of Sunyata.

(2) Vijnanavada : Asanga (4th A.D.) declared that the objective world is merely the project of one's mind, which alone has a real existence (Vijnaptimatratā). He considers Vijnaptimatratā equal to Sunyavada (Tatheta). His school is called Vijnanavada or Yogacara. His highest reality, the sunyata of the Madhyamikas and the Tathata of the Vijnanavadina is beyond description. Thus the Buddhists who started with a belief in plurality of essential elements came finally to accept one essential element in the universe corresponding to Brahmanic conception of one principle accepted by the Vedanta schools.

(3) Sarvastivada : Vasubandhu, the youngest brother of Asanga, was a follower of Hinayana in the beginning. He propounded the principle that every object in the world was real. He believed that there are 75 elements in this world. From the synthesis and separation of these 75 elements all the objects of this world are created. The followers of this sect were also called *vaibhasikas* because they had full faith in the commentaries on the sutras which were written in the reign of Kaniska. Later vasubandhu accepted Vijnanavada of Asanga.

(4) Sautrantikas : They had faith only in the sutras and bitterly opposed the realism of the Sarvastivadism. According to them external objects were appearances and their existence could be proved

only by inference. According to the Sautrantikas there is no substance (anatma) no duration (anitya) and no bliss (duhkha) except nirvana (sukha). It was also a school of Hinayana.

The Buddha aimed at the development of a new type of free man, free from prejudices, intent on working out his own future, with one's self as one's own light.¹⁹ The free spirit sees no bounds to its love, recognizes in all human beings a spark of the divine, and offers itself up a willing victim to the cause of mankind. It casts off all fear of death and finds inexhaustible power in life eternal.²⁰

3.4 Decline of Buddhism in India:

Scholars have assigned different reasons for the decline of Buddhism in India. From the account of Yuan Chwang (Hieun Tsang) it is clear that when he visited India in Buddhism was in decline. There were many factors which led to its decline in the 7th century A.D. By that time Buddhism has lost its vitality. Sankaracarya by calling this world Maya (illusion) had adopted those very arguments which were the base of Buddhist criticism against Brahmanical concept of the universe. Mahayana had brought Buddhism nearer to Hinduism. The Buddha himself was recognized as an incarnation of Vishnu. The Tantras altered the shape of Buddhism beyond recognition and further narrowed down the gulf that still separated the Buddhists from the Hindus. Brahmanical influence pervaded Buddhist theology and iconography. The most important reason of the disappearance of Buddhism from India seems to be as S. Radhakrishnan has stated that Hinduism had absorbed all the good principles of Buddhism such as non-violence and sympathy for others. Buddhism did not actually die in India but was reborn in the form of reformed Hinduism.

3.5 Spread of Buddhism

The greater part of the Buddha's later life was occupied with the organization of the *Sangha*, a great order of Bhikshus. It was destined to become one of the greatest religious corporations the world has ever seen. It carried his message to all parts of the world then known. He lived long enough to see it grow out of infancy. The administration of the Sangha he was bared entirely upon ancient political institutions of the Aryan village. It has governed on strictly democratic lines and had great authority to enforce discipline and to punish erring members. Its constitution was evolved, so to say entirely by case law. Every difficulty as it arose was referred to the Buddha and his decision became the guiding principle for the future. He was a leader of exceptional authority and decision. He had a genius for organization and the affairs of the order were regulated with an attention and thoroughness. Monks were expected to live a life of sustained intellectual activity for themselves and of benevolence for others. The privilege of joining the Sangha was granted to woman with greatest hesitation. The organization of the Sangha was a great practical achievement of the Buddha. It has maintained its prestige to the present day in many Asiatic countries. This institution has no doubt been the chief cause of the remarkable success of his mission.

3.6 Role of Asoka:

During the lifetime of the Buddha, he had made converts within the limits of Madhyadesa and pragdesa²¹. This is roughly speaking the outcome of the data furnished by the sacred texts. These conditions of

things remained stationary until the conversion of Asoka, which event inaugurated a period of zealous propaganda in distant countries. The grand Mauryan emperor transformed the comparatively insignificant sect into a world religion. The grand personality of Asoka, and the steadfastness of his purpose, backed by the resources of a mighty empire, gave an unparalleled impetus to the religion he patronized.

The third Buddhist council²² was convened in about 250 BCE at Asokarama in Patiliputra, supposedly under the patronage of Emperor Asoka. One of the most significant achievements ascribed by Theravada tradition to this *Dhamma Assembly* and one which was to bear fruit for centuries to come, was the Emperor's sending forth of monks, well versed in the Buddha's Dhamma and Vinaya who could recite all of it by heart, to teach it in nine different countries."

- (1) Majjhantika (Mahiyantika) *thera* was sent to Kasmira-Gandhara in 3rd century BC.
- (2) Mahadeva *thera* was sent to Mahisamandala (Mysore)
- (3) Rakkhita *thera* was sent to Vanavasi (Tamil Nadu) ²⁴
- (4) Yona Dhammrakkhite *thera* to Aparantaka (Northern Gujrat, Kathiawar, Kachch and Sindh)
- (5) Mahadhammarakkhita *thera* to Maharattha (Maharashtra)
- (6) Maharakkhita *thera* to Yona (Greece)
- (7) Majjhima *thera* to Himavanta (area in Himalaya)
- (8) Sona *thera* and Uttara *thera* to Suvarnabhumi (Myanmar, Mongolia and Thailand)
- (9) Mahamahinda (Mehendra son of Asoka) *thera* to Lanka dipa (Sri Lanka).

Buddhism which was thus raised to the status of a world religion became of course the leading religion in India. According to V.D. Mahajan, it appears that the only object of Asoka's life was to spread the law of piety of Dhamma among not only his own subjects but also in countries outside India. He harnessed all the resources of the state to popularise Buddhism. The whole machinery of the state was employed for this purpose. He also directed the Yuktas, Pradeshikas and Dharma-Mahamatras to go on tours and spread the law of piety among the people. The principles of this Dhamma were engraved on pillars and rocks and missionaries were sent to foreign countries as mentioned above.

According to R.C. Majumdar²⁵, the bands of foreign invaders that appeared on Indian soil were attracted by its catholicity and must have been converted in large numbers. One of these the Greek king Menander, or as the Indians, called him Milindra or Milinda still lives in the Buddhist tradition and is said to have been converted by the *sthavira* Nagasena as depicted in the Milindapanha. But by far the greatest name among the foreign patrons of Buddhism is that of Kaniska. His fame in the Buddhist world is only second to that of Asoka. Like the Maurya Emperor Asoka he convened a Buddhist council, the fourth of its kind to settle the text of the holy scriptures and his political relation with the central Asian states probably helped the propagation of Buddhism in central and Northern Asia. Buddhism had already reached China on the one hand and Burma, Siam, the Malaya Peninsula and Islands in the Indonesian Archipelago on the other. Thus towards the end of the Kushana dynasty, it was the leading religion in the whole of Asia.

3.7 Buddhism in Kashmir:

According to Dr. Sunil Chandra Ray, Buddhism seems to have obtained a footing in Kashmir as early as the 3rd century B.C. the Ceylonese Chronicle *Mahavamsa* preserves an account of the introduction of Buddhism in the valley by Majjantika²⁶. That Buddhism was first preached in Kashmir by Madhyantika and that he succeeded in making a large number of converts also receives confirmation from tradition recorded in the Tibetan work *Dul-va*²⁷ and the account of Hiuen Tsang.²⁸

According to the native sources of Kashmir, we learn from Kalhana that Kashmir formed a part of the Empire of Asoka, who was a follower of Jina i.e. Buddha²⁹ and built in the valley numerous stupas³⁰, some of which were existing as late as the time of the Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen Tsang's visit.³¹ The great Emperor who was zealous always in preaching and disseminating the religion of Buddha throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom and even beyond seems to have tried his best to spread it in the secluded vale of Kashmir too.

H. Kern (in his *A manual of Indian Buddhism*) attributes the introduction of Buddhism to Kashmir to a monk called Madhyantika (Majihantika), a disciple of Ananda to constant companion and servitor of the Great Teacher Gautama Buddha³². The Buddhist legend regarding his journey to Kashmir and his victory over the Naga king is a recension of the Nilmatpurana legend. A similar tradition appears in *mulasarvastivada vinaya pitaka* of Kashmir. In this text, Buddha is said to have forecast to Vajrapani that Madhandina, a disciple of Ananda would propagate his religion in Kashmir, the land of the blue forests. He would subdue the

malevolent Huluta Naga, and extend the seat on which he would sit cross legged to miraculously cover the whole of Kashmir, thereby ousting the Nagas from their habitation, and making the vast country of 60,000 villages an abode for meditating monks.³³

The spread of Buddhism to Kashmir is an event of extraordinary importance in the history of that religion. Thence forward that country became a mistress of the Buddhist doctrine and the headquarters of a particular school - the Mahayana and the Sarvastivadin. The influence of Kashmir was very marked, especially in the spread of Buddhism beyond India. From Kashmir it penetrated to Kandhar and Kabul and thence over Bactria. Tibetan Buddhism had also its essential origin from Kashmir so great is the importance of this region in the history of this religion.³⁴

Historically speaking Asoka inaugurated the Buddhism in Kashmir when he brought 5,000 Buddhist monks and settled them in Kashmir to popularize the Hinayana Buddhism in Kashmir and adjacent territories. He built several *maths*, as he thought Kashmir was an ideal place for pursuing higher studies and spiritual practices.³⁵ There is nothing improbable in the supposition that the first missionary activity was in the direction of Muttra and Kashmir. Muttra (Mathura) was the centre of a powerful school of orthodox Brahmanism and Kashmir was from ancient times the seat of Shiva-Cult. These two divisions of the Hindu philosophy dominated the Indian mind from the North to the South and it was therefore, necessary to convince and convert the learned pandits at these strongholds, just as in the 12th century A.D. Ramanuja, leader of the Vaisnava belief felt compelled to travel from distant Madras with the special object of combating the rival Saiva creed in Kashmir, its fountainhead.

After the death of Samrat Ashoka in 232 BC at Patliputra, at the age of 72, his son Jalauka became his successor in Kashmir. Jalauka, if Kalhana is to be believed was anti-Buddhist and destroyer of monasteries. He is said to have revived the Naga and Saiva cults. After this set back for some time Buddhism was re-established by the Indo-Scythian rulers particularly by Huska, Juska and Kaniska who built several *caityas* and *mathas* at Suksaletra and other places. The Buddhism of Kashmir entered its golden phase under the patronage of these kings who came to occupy the valley about the end of the 1st century A.D. Kalhana mentions that three Turuskas i.e. Kusana kings Huska, Juska and Kaniska ruled over Kashmir and founded three towns called Huskapura(modern Huskur),Juskapur(modern Juskura) and Kanishkapura (modern Kanisapur).³⁶ These Kusana kings were given to acts of piety and built many *viharas*, *mathas*, *caityas* and similar other structures.³⁷ During their powerful rule, the land of Kashmir was to a great extent, under the possession of Buddhas who by practising the law of religious mendicancy, had acquired great renown.³⁸

Buddhism again suffered a reverse after the rule of the Kusan rulers and later in the 5th century A.D. it was nearly wiped off the valley by the Huna ruler Mihirakula. Baka, Mihirakula's son however seems to have atoned for his predecessor's sins by restoring the *caityas* and *mathas*. Not only the Kusana kings but local rulers of Kashmir also seem to have patronized the Buddhism in the early centuries of the Christian era. One of its early kings, Meghavahana, prohibited the slaughter of animals in his kingdom.³⁹ He also stopped the killing of animals in the sacrifices.⁴⁰ Amrtaprebha, the wife of the king erected a *vihara* for Buddhist monks,

which was called *Amrtabhavana*⁴¹. Many *viharas* of renown were built by other Queens.⁴² Kalhana compares the king with Jina i.e.; Buddha and also with Bodhisttvas.⁴³ All these probably indicate Meghavahan's attachment to the faith of the Sakya Prince.

During the reign of Pravarasena (6th Century A.D.) his maternal uncle Jayendra built a *vihara* and erected a statue of the Great Buddha⁴⁴, Pravasena, according to Kalhana, was succeeded by his son Yudhistra II. Several of his successors who bore the names of Sarvaranta, Jaya and Skandagupta obtained distinct by erecting *vihara* and *caityas*.⁴⁵ In the *vihara* built by a queen of king Meghavahana, a fine statue of Buddha was placed by Amrtaprabha, the wife of king Ranaditya.⁴⁶

A fairly reliable account of the condition of Buddhism in Kashmir from the 7th century onwards has been furnished by the accounts of the Chinese travellers Hieun Tsang and Ou- Kong, the chronicle of Kalhana and some archaeological discoveries made at Gilgit, Pandrathan and Parihaspor. Several Buddhist manuscripts were found out from a *stupa* at Gilgit⁴⁷ the script used in the manuscripts may be assigned to the 6th or 7th century A.D. Buddhism was thus flourishing in the northern part of Kashmir sometime about the end of the 6th century A.D. or in the early part of the next under the patronage of Sahi rulers. To about the same period as the manuscripts of Gilgit, may probably be assigned also a large number of Buddhist sculptures hailing from the village of Pandrethan (ancient *puranadhisthana*). Purunadhis thana was the capital of Kashmir from a very early date. From stylistic consideration, the sculptural remains discovered at Pandrethan seem to have belonged to a period when the

old city was finally abandoned in favor of the new. Besides two Buddhist *stupas* and the courtyard of a *monestry* the objects of Buddhist antiquities found at Pandrethan include two standing figures of Buddha, a seated statue of Buddha, one diademed and ornamented image of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, another fragmentary sculptured relief of Buddha or Bodhisattva and lastly a relief representation of the birth of Siddhartha.⁴⁸(*Plate I*)

Hiuen Tsang visited Kashmir in A.D. 631. He saw in the valley about one hundred *Sangharamas* and five thousand Buddhist priests. There were four stupas built by Asoka each of which contained relics of Tathagata. Among the Buddhist viharas visited by him specific mention is made of the Jaskavihara (mod. Uskur near Brramulla) and Jayendra vihara the Chinese pilgrim stayed in the court of Durlabha-Vardhana, the then king of Kashmir for a couple of years, during which period (with the help of the local clerks)⁴⁹ he took copies of a large number of Buddhist scriptures. Evidently Kashmir was a great centre of Buddhism when Hieun Tsang visited it. Though the Karkotas were Hindu rulers but they still maintained harmony with their Buddhist subjects. Lalitaditya Muktapida, one of the great rulers of Kashmir founded Rajvihara with a large quadrangle and a large caitya at Parihaspura. At Huskapura, the noble minded king built another large vihara with a stupa.⁵⁰A colossal copper image of Buddha was made by him. Archaeological excavations carried on at Parihaspura, the city founded by Lalitaditya, have brought to light Buddhist structures, a stupa, a monastery and a caitya. Among the sculptures discovered at Parihaspura, there are two images of Bodhisattva and one of Buddha. All these prove to the hilt the popularity of Buddhism in the days of the

Karkotas. The thriving state of Buddhism during the reign of the Karkotas (7th and 8th) centuries A.D. is also attested to by the evidence of the Chinese traveler Ou-Kong, who came to Kashmir in A.D. 759. He spent four years in the valley in pilgrimages to holy sites and in studying Sanskrit. He learnt the *silas* and the *Vinayas* of the Mulasarvastivadins at the Moun-ti-vihara. The other *viharas* referred to by him are Ngo-mi-to-po-wan, Ngo-nan-i, Ki-tche, Nago-ye-le, je-je, ye-li-te-le and ko-toan.⁵² While Hiuen Tsang saw about one hundred *viharas*, Du-Kong noticed more than three hundred *viharas* in Kashmir and innumerable *stupas* and sacred images. This undoubtedly indicates a rise in the popularity of Buddhism in the valley during the period of Karkotas.

Buddhism seems to have been overshadowed by the growing Vaisnava and Saiva faith which became predominant in the Valley in the centuries following the Karkota period. The dynasty of Utpala supplanted the Karkotas about the middle of the 9th century A.D. The founder of this dynasty, Avantivarman (AD 855/56-883) was a staunch follower of Siva and Visnu and the architectural remains which have been discovered from the site of Avantipura, the town founded by the monarch, include some images of Visnu, Siva and other Brahmanic Gods, but not a single figure of Buddha or Bodhisattva. But though Buddhism was in the background, the opinion cherished by some scholars that from the middle of the 9th A.D. on till the advent of the 11th century, the Buddhists fell on evil days and all the kings were anti-Buddhist in spirit.⁵³ Seems to be an extreme view yet to be established beyond doubt. Except Ksema Gupta (A.D. 950-58) and Harsa (AD. 1089-1101), no king of this period is known to have cherished any anti-Buddhist feeling in their heart. But the wrath of a

cruel eccentric king against a single particular Buddhist monastery should not be taken as an instance of systematic policy of religious persecution adopted by the state against the Buddhists. A remarkably fine statue of the Bodhisattva Padmapani (*plate 3*) is now preserved in the Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar. An inscription engraved at the base mentions its consecration in the reign of Queen Didda (A.D. 980-1003). That Buddha was not looked with disapproval in the 11th century A.D. receives further corroboration from the writings of Ksemendra who says that during his time, birth day of Buddha was observed with great ceremony in the valley.

In 12th century A.D. Buddhism received patronage from king Jayasimha who ascended the throne of Kashmir in A.D. 1128. Many Buddhist viharas were built or repaired during this period, like Sullavihara.⁵⁶ It is almost definite that Buddha was held in high honor in Kashmir up to the last days of Hindu rule. A stone inscription generally taken to have been dated A.D. 1197 has been discovered at Arigon (anc. Hadigrama) about 15 miles South-West of Srinagar. The inscription opens with a salutation to Buddha Avalokitesvara and exalts him with glorious title (*Namo Bhagvate Aryavalokitesvaraya Trailokyaloabhutaya Lokabhavacuide Jagadananda Candraya Lokanathaya tenamah*)⁵⁷.

3.8 Decline

After enjoying a golden age of about 10 centuries in Kashmir Buddhism started to fade away in Kashmir during the 7th century A.D. The decline of Buddhism in Kashmir can be ascribed to many reasons. According to Dr. Sunil Chandra it was the growing Vaisnava and Saiva faith which overshadowed Buddhism in Kashmir.⁵⁸ P.N.K. Bamzai states

that the loss of royal patronage caressed its decline.⁵⁹ According to Dr. Ab. Ahad, it was the encroachment of corrupt practices into the Sangha which led it towards decline.⁶⁰

Although Buddhism gained great popularity within the masses, it was never able to destroy Saiva and Vaisnu cult which continued to exist even when the rival Buddhism was at its height .Buddhism had started as a simple faith, But with the lapse of time it had become austere and formal. Its strict discipline in due course became a troublesome burden on its followers who now craved for an escape from it. Besides Buddhism ignored God, while its rival Saiva and Vaisnu cults in Kashmir were based on a staunch belief in God. This atheistical tendency must have turned people against it. With the passage of time those very features of Hinduism were introduced into Buddhism against which its founder Gautama Buddha raised his voice of protest. The rise of Mahayana, a product of Kashmir Buddhism⁶¹ led to the worship of the Buddha and Bodhisativas and created many more of the latter, such as Avalokitesvara. According to Dr. Ab. Ahad the *lingam yantra* rituals and Tantric concepts developed further under the sunny disposition of the egalitarian Buddhism, enjoying full public support and royal patronage to become a common sight of obscene gestures, drunken revelries and salacious gossips amidst dense forests and at the untamed foot hills where, icons, hermits and Bikshus cropped up with their sensuousness to experiance the delight of sexual union. Ksemendra after having conversation with a Bhikshu finds him a gambler, burglar, strangler of his enemies, fond of women companionship, and a drunkard eating fish yet a Bhikshu.

Kalhana also writes about these so called spiritually high and mighty Bhikshus who in utter disregard to the Buddhist Canons brought intolerable plague by their indulgence in pleasure-seeking and property owning. Kashmir had thus married Bikshus who also owned property. In the *viharas* separate arrangements were made for the Bikshus who possessed wives, Children and Cattle. Thus Kalhana writes in his famous *Rajtarangini*, that in one half of the *vihara* were placed those Bhikshus whose conduct conformed to the precepts and in the other those who being in possession of wives, children cattle and property deserved blame for their life as householders.⁶³

Loss of Royal patronage also played a vital role in the decline of Buddhism in Kashmir. Buddhism had quickly risen to the status of a world religion through the remarkable enterprise of its royal devotees. The Buddhist monarchs like Asoka and Kaniska had mobilized the resources of the state in the cause of Buddhism. After their death state patronage was withdrawn from Buddhism. As a result of the above mentioned reason, by the end of the 13th century Buddhism disappeared from the valley, some of the followers perhaps adopted Islam and the rest found a welcome home in Ladakh where it is still the predominant faith.

3.9 Contribution of Kashmir:

The place of Kashmir in the history of Buddhism was great indeed. From the moment Buddhism was preached in the valley, Kashmir became mistress of the Buddhist doctrine and particularly the Sarvastivada school. One of the greatest patrons of Buddhism Kaniska is said to have been converted to Buddhism by a Kashmiri monk, Sudarsana.⁶⁴ He was so

enamored of his new religion that he wanted to beat the record of Asoka in its propagation. But the existence of conflicting and contradictory schools of thought among the followers of Buddhist religion confused him and therefore under the advice of Parsva, his religious preceptor, he decided to call a council of the learned doctors on the model of the one held at Patliputra during Asoka's reign. It was a direct result of Asoka's council that Buddhism was carried to countries south of Indian peninsula. Kaniska's council gave a fresh impetus to the faith; Tibet, South central Asia and China lay along the great missionary routes of Northern Buddhism. It was introduced into Korea in 372 A.D. and thence into Japan in 552 A.D. The council is important also for the fact that it marks the point of separation between northern and southern Buddhism. Hence it becomes necessary to have a detailed account of this council.

3.9. (i) Fourth Buddhist Council⁶⁵ :

According to H. Kern, the council was held in A.D. 100 either at Kuvana near Jalandhar or at the monastery of Kundalavan in Kashmir. P.N.K. Bamzai states that it was held in Kashmir at Kundalavan.⁶⁶ But where is that place, that is still to be established.⁶⁷

Hieun Tsang has given a vivid picture of the proceeding of the council collected from a study of its records and reports maintained in different libraries in Kashmir which were extant then Paramarth (A.D. 499-560) in his life of Vasubandhu also gives an account of the council, but though differing in detail generally agree with the observations of Hieun Tsang. He says that the King acting in consultation with Parsva, issued summons to all the learned doctors of his realm. They came in such numbers that a severe test was imposed and only 499 Arhats were

selected.⁶⁸ There was some discussion as to the place of meeting but finally Kashmir was selected and the king built a residential monastery for the Brethren to reside and hold their meeting in.⁶⁹ When the council met at Kundalvan monastery near the capital of Kashmir, there arose a question as to whether Vasumitra should be admitted seeing that he was not an Arhat but aspired to the career of a Bodhisattva. However later on he was not only admitted but made the president. This was a signal victory for the Mahayanists. Other celebrated scholars including Asvagosh, Vasumitra and Nagarjuna took part in the deliberations. Heun Tsang writes, then there were in the congregation certain priests versed in the doctrine of the Great vehicle, Visudha Simha, Jina Bandu and of the Sarvastivadin school, Sugatamitra, Vasumitra and of the Mahasanghika the Surgadar and Jinamitra. About the scholars of Kashmir who took part in the council Heun Tsang remarks, that the country from remote times was distinguished for learning and these priests were all of high religious merit and conspicuous virtues, as well as of manner, talent and power of exposition of doctrine, and though the priests of other nations were in their own way distinguished yet they could not be compared with these .So, different were they from the ordinary class.⁷⁰

The council is said to have sat for six months and collected scattered sayings, theories and dictums of various doctors of law. The council is believed to have composed 100,000 stanzas of Upadesh Sastras explanatory of the canonical sutras, 100,000 stanzas of *Vinaya Vibhasa Sutra*, explanatory of Abhidharma. For this exposition of the Tripitaka all of learning from antiquity was thoroughly examined; the general sense and the terse language was again and again made clear and distinct and

learning was widely diffused for the guiding of the disciples. The Kaniska's commentaries were written in the Sanskrit language because the Kashmir and the northern priests who formed this council belonged to the isolated Aryan colonies, which had been little influenced by the growth of the Indian vernacular dialects. In this way it was distinct from Asoka's council who wrote all their books in Pali. King Kaniska caused the treatise when finished to be written out on copper plates and enclosed these in stone boxes which he deposited in a *tope* made for the purpose.⁷¹

Where this *stupa* existed has become the mystery. Nobody till date has succeeded to locate the site. Although it was Heun Tsang who was first to give birth to this mystery when he in his accounts made the mention of copper plates which are buried somewhere in a Kashmiri *stupa*. He could not give the exact location of the site and left it for the future scholars to identify it. Although some efforts have recently been made to find the buried copper plates engraved with the proceedings of the council, no trace has yet been found of the. Most probably it may be somewhere on the modern Srinagar Baramulla road, where the ancient Kaniskapura (mod. Kenisrpur) lies.

3.9. (ii) Development of Mahayana :

The teachings of Buddha during his life time and immediately afterwards found a ready and enthusiastic audience among the general population of Madhydesa (modern U.P. and Bihar) who had been growing under the heavy burden of archaic and complicated Brahmanic rites and rituals and the powerful upper castes, realized a new salvation and relief in his doctrine. In this manner it was a revolutionary movement against the dogmas of Brahmanism and majority of its followers came

from the lower castes or in the modern sense from the depressed sections of the society. The actual geographic extension of the doctrine comes to forefront only during the period of its patronage by Asoka. Sir Charles Eliot states that some of the Sanskrit version of the Vinaya represent Lord Buddha as visiting Muttra, North West India and Kashmir.⁷² Kashmir and Muttra had been the powerful schools of Saivism and Brahmanism respectively. These were the two division of Hindu philosophy which dominated the Indian mind from North to South.

Besides this, the pleasant climate and scenic beauty of Kashmir are said to have been praised by the Lord Gautama himself. In the Samyuktavastu (*Chapter XI, Tran.in J.A. (Journal of Asiatic Society) 1914*) the Buddha is represented as saying that Kashmir is the best land for meditation and leading a religious life, when Buddhism attained the status of a state religion, under Asoka, Kashmir was one of the first regions to receive his attention.

These learned Pandits of Kashmir imbued with the spirit of toleration and ever ready to investigate and learn every new thought, received the canon with all respect due to it and after critically studying it gave it a new interpretation suiting the times and the aspiration of the people. Thus was produced the Mahayana or greater vehicle, which while holding fast to the real foundations of Buddhism, its ethical views of self-conduct and charity, is in fact an entirely new religion. Prof. G.C. Pande looks upon Mahayana as a conception of universal religion developed within the Buddhist tradition.⁷³ The popularity of old Buddhism rested chiefly on the simplicity of its doctrine namely that the state of the untrammelled self (Atman) is bliss and therefore birth is misery, the cause of misery is desire

and therefore the cessation of desire and the path leading to that, is right behavior and right concentration of thought, but the complete denial or negation of the existence of a Supreme Being or God could not for long keep the minds of the general masses attached to this form of religion. This pessimistic outlook of life and the world was doubly enhanced by the central point of Hinyana, the doctrine of Arhatship, a system of ethical and mental self culture in which deliverance was found from all mysteries of sorrows of life in a change of heart to be reached here on this earth. In other words the doctrine of Arhatship stresses on individual's own efforts for his own salvation. But for the saints and scholars of Kashmir, deeply learned in more subtle and higher philosophies, this doctrine seemed crude as well as incapable of keeping the masses attached to it for long. Coming into contact with these masterminds, the simple creed of early Buddhism got permeated with their refined ritualistic and philosophic teachings.

The philosophic literature of Mahayana therefore bears a deep impress of Kashmir Saivism whose doctrines revolve round their fundamental conceptions of Siva and Shakti. Siva is the reality which underlies, as its innermost and true self not only every experiencing being but also everything else in the universe. His nature has primarily a twofold aspect, an imminent aspect in which he is beyond all universal manifestations and universe with all its infinite variety of objects and means of experience is nothing but a manifestation of the immanent aspect Sakti. This Sakti is not in any way different from or independent of Siva, but is one and the same with him and his creative power spoken of

as his feminine aspect. This belief in Siva or a supreme being readily filled up the lacuna in early Buddhism or Hinayana.

But the greatest contribution to the evolution of Buddhism that changed its entire complexion and made it a popular religion of the masses states Prem Nath Bazaz was made by Nagarjuna, who flourished in the first century CE. By birth this great thinker belonged to Berar, but early in his age he made Kashmir his home and settled at Sadahadvna (modern Harwan), a village 12 miles distant from Srinagar. Bazaz calls Nagarjuna Luther of Buddhism, the apostle of Bhakti-marga, who would find means of expression for the deep seated religious instincts of the masses through the way of devotion to the Divine Teacher, rather than through the dry agnostic philosophy of Hinayana schools. Nagarjuna is the author of the radical school of the Mahayanist Buddhism, which is called the Madhyamika, the middle way. It no doubt made Buddhism a popular creed over the greater part of Asia. Nagarjuna has been raised to the exalted position of Bodhisattva and enjoys the reputation of being the greatest thinker of the age. The powerful critical philosophy of Nagarjuna has been revived by the Japanese commentators of the modern times. Kalhana tells us that the dialectics of Nagarjuna's critical philosophy destroyed the primitive beliefs of the people of Kashmir as it cut at the roots of the religious rites prescribed in the Nilmatpurana.⁸³

3.9. iii Spread of the Doctrine from Kashmir :

Though the early Buddhist doctrine had been carried to China through Indian missionaries in the second Century B.C, It was not able to root itself there firmly. It was however three centuries later that Mahayana after gaining in strength and popularity and attaining the status of a state

religion under Kaniska was with great success carried to central Asia, Tibet, Java and China mostly by Kashmiri missionaries. As a result of Kaniska's council, there burst forth an enthusiastic missionary spirit among the Kashmiri's who carried this religion to China across difficult passes and thus produced a great fermentation and controversy in Chinese thought. One has only to compare the China of the Hans⁷⁴ with the China of the Tang's (618-906A.D.) to see how great the change was, brought by this faith states P.N.K. Bamzai. The diffusion of the Indian influence was due to the activities of these missionaries which were exclusively Buddhist and the preponderating number came from Kashmir⁷⁵. P.N.K. Bamzai quoting Dr. P.C. Bagchi states that Kashmir takes the leading part in the transmission of Buddhist traditions directly to China. Majority of the Buddhist scholars who went to China were from Kashmir. Dr. Bagchi recognizes Kashmir as the most flourishing centre of Buddhist learning, especially of the most powerful Buddhist sect of the Northern India, the Sarvastivada.⁷⁶

According to P.N.K. Bamzai, Kumarajiva (343-413 A.D), who received his education in Kashmir and became the leading figure of the missionary activities of Kashmir. After the completion of his studies, he returned to Kucha accompanied by a large number of Kashmiri scholars. At Kucha he established a monastery and undertook the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist texts in collaboration with his Kashmirian followers and explained these to the Central Asian and Chinese audiences which flocked to hear his sermons. His fame spread far and wide and he was recognized as a living encyclopedia of Indian learning. When in A.D. 383, Fu-Chien, Emperor of the Tsia dynasty invaded Kucha, Kumarajiva was taken as a captive and became one of the greatest names in Chinese Buddhism. He went to

capital in 401A.D. on the request of Chinese Emperor. He carried on his mission there and was later joined by many of his Kashmiri fellows, where he died in 413 A.D. The members of his missionary group included two celebrated Kashmiri monks Yasa and Vimalaksha, who succeeded in giving a real Chinese contact to ideas which had hitherto been only nebulous and elusive.

According to Marco Polo Kashmiri monks went and spread Buddhism in other parts of China too. He mentions a Kashmiri monk Sanghabuti who reached the northern capital of China in 381 A.D. His activities can be traced till 384 A.D. At the request of Chinese scholars, he is reported to have translated Vinayrpitaka from Sanskrit to Chinese and also wrote an exhaustive commentary on it.⁷⁸ Another great scholar states Bamzai, Gautamasangha went from Kashmir to the Northern capital of China with a number of Kashmiri fellows. Dharmayasa was another Kashmiri missionary who left for China at the age of thirty. He travelled extensively in Asia converting a large number of people to his faith and writing books. He reached China in 401A.D. and remained there till 435 A.D. In collaboration with a large number of Kashmiri scholars, he translated several important works in to Chinese. Likewise among the celebrated Kashmiri monks who were adventurous enough to travel across the high mountains into china, the name of Buddha Yasas⁷⁹ stands high. Being the only son of a Kashmiri Brahman, he left for China at an age of 27. He reached Kashgar where he captivated the mind of the Chief who became his devout follower. Here he came into contact with great Kumarajiva. Between 410-413 A.D, he translated four works into Chinese among which were Dirghagama and Dharmaguptakavinaya.

South China had also its batch of Kashmiri missionaries Buddhajiva, who was a collaborator and companion of Fa-Hien reached south china by sea in 423. Fa-Hien during his travels in central Asia and India had collected a large number of Sanskrit manuscripts, some of which were later translated by Buddhajiva into Chinese language. The name of Vimalaksha is heard to be another collaborator of Kumarajiva. He worked with him in China from 406 to 413 A.D. translating several works with him there and explaining them to the people and the students. After Kumarajivas death in 413 he went to south china and worked there for the rest of his life. Dharmamitra a famous teacher of Dhyana or meditative school translated several works on meditation into the Chinese language and also taught a large number of students in this branch of Buddhist philosophy. He also founded the Jetavana monastery. He went to south china in 424 A.D. and lived there up to his death in A.D. 442. He is said to have translated 12 Buddhist texts into the Chinese language Buddhavarman was another Kashmiri missionary who went to western chine shortly before 433 A.D. and being a specialist in Vibhasa translated Mahavibhasa Sastra in 60 chapters during the years 437-39 A.D.

One of the greatest Kashmiri monks who was responsible for the conversion of whole Java and neighboring islands was Gonnavarmana, a prince of a royal family of Kashmir. From his very childhood, he was religious by nature and at an early age he thoroughly grasped the Buddhist scriptures and committed thousands of sutras to memory filled with the zeal of propagation of the Buddhist doctrine he first went to Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Then he went to the Java, where Brahmanism was flourishing according to Fa-hien, this position however changed

altogether by the preaching's of Gonnavarmana. The king of the java and his family were the first to be converted by him in 423 A.D and the subjects soon followed suit. Being a Kashmiri, Gonnavarmana was most probably a Sarvastivadin which explains the study of this school of philosophy by the Javanese Buddhists.

Kashmiri missionaries played an important role in the propagation of Buddhism to the mysterious land of Tibet. Though the earliest entrance of Buddhism into Tibet was from India proper, yet Kashmir twice in the history of Tibetan Buddhism played the most important part. As a direct result of Kanishkas council, numerous missionaries went forth from Kashmir to spread the doctrine in Tibet. Many of the Pandits who labored at the translation of the sacred books into Tibetan were Kashmiris. In the end of the 9th century, when Buddhism was exptirpated in Tibet by the Julian of the Lamas, the great persecutor ofLang Dharma, and when it was restored a century later, it was from Kashmir in particular that fresh missionaries were procured to reinstruct the people in the forgotten Lacs.⁸¹ The greatest figure, who is responsible for the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet and the formation of Tibetan script and grammar is the great Shyama Bhatta known in the Tibet as Thumi Sambhota and worshiped as an incarnation on Manjusri. He became the minister of Tibetan king Srang Tsangampo. He was the founder of Lhasa (Present Capital of Tibet) and in 623 A.D. he was formally asked to preach to his people. Sambhota later paid a visit to Kashmir in search of sacred books and many Kashmiri scholars accompanied him and then he again settled in Tibet. He invented a written character for translation of the secred books to Tibetan, which was based on the Sanskrit alphabet prevalent in Kashmir at

that time. The most famous of all works ascribed to him is the Manikambum "*The Myriad of precious words*" a treatise chiefly on religion but which also contained an account of the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet.⁸²

From the above discussion it becomes evident that Kashmir had been the high school of Buddhist teachings. Numerous scholars well versed in different philosophical branches of this great doctrine labored at producing works of deep merit and imparting education to Kumerjiva like students coming from far and near. The composition of the *vibhasa-sastras* in Kashmir indicates that Kashmir grew up to be an academic centre attracting distinguished *acaryas* from other places. The accounts of the Chinese travellers and Paramartha show that *Katayaniputra*, *Asvaghosa*, *Vasubandhu*, *Vasumitra*, *Dharmatrata*, *Sanghabhadra*, *Visuddhasimha*, *Jinabandhu*, *Suagtamitra*, *Suryadeva*, *Jinatrata*, *Kankavastra* and many other distinguished teachers and writers lived in Kashmir from the time of Kaniska. It is further attested by the visits of Chinese pilgrims to Kashmir especially Heun Tsang who stayed in Kashmir during the reign of Durlabavardhana from 631-637 A.D. studying the *sutras* and *sastras*

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55. *Avadanakalpalata* Intr. Verse 16. "Samivatsre saptavimse vaisakhasya sitodaye | Krt eyam Kalpalatika Jina janmam ahotsave | |
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58. *Early History and Culture of Kashmir* 2nd Edition-1970 (Dr.S.C Ray) page 165.
59. *Culture And Political History of Kashmir* P.N.K.Bamzai Vol.I Page 72.
60. *Kashmir Rediscovered* Dr. Ab. Ahad Page 60.
61. *Culture And Political History of Kashmir* P.N.K.Bamzai Vol.I Page 75.
62. *Kashmir Rediscovered* Dr. Ab. Ahad Page 61.
63. *Rajtarangini* (English Translation With Introduction And Notes By Sir Aurel Stein Indian Edition 1961) Vol.I Book III 12.

64. *Manual of Indian Buddhism* H.Kern Page 121.
65. H.Kern and P.N.K Bamzai have referred it to be the 3rd Buddhist Council. Kern do not considers the Council of Patliputra as a council in true sense but only a meeting of the learned monks. See *Manual of Indian Buddhism* Page 110 and 121.
66. *Early History of India* Smith p. 283.
67. The names of the places suggested in the process are Kuntikleun (From Harwan to Gupkar Srinagar, Kund in Kulgam District and Kanelvan in Bijbehara Tehsil of District Anantnag. There is another place Kundlen in District Shopian which can also be the corrupt form of Kundalvan).
68. *Manual of Indian Buddhism* H.Kern Page 121.
69. *Hinduism and Buddhism* Sir Charles Eliot Page 263.
70. *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* Thomas Watters London 1904-05 I Page pp 270-71.
71. *Manual of Indian Buddhism* H.Kern Page 121.
72. *Hinduism and Buddhism* Sir Charles Eliot Page 263.
73. *Studies in Mahayana* Prof. G.C.Pande Chapter I Page 1.
74. *Former Han Dynasty (202B.C-9 A.D) Later Han Dynasty (23 A.D- 220 A.D)*
75. *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India* Thomas Watters London 1904-05 I Page 258.
76. *Culture And Political History of Kashmir* P.N.K.Bamzai Vol.I Page 86.
77. *Travels of Marco Polo* Tr.Henry Yule 1875. I pp. 166-67.
78. It is said that one day a monk called called at the door of Yasa's father for alms, but the old Brahmin in his rage attacked him and

turned him out. Retribution followed soon. The hand that had struck the monk was paralysed, in order to expiate the sin, the Brahmin went in search of him. He requested him to come his home and to show his deep reverence offered him his only son Yasa to be taken into the fold. (Culture Ad Political History of Kashmir P.N.K.Bamzai Vol.I Page 90)

79. *Culture And Political History of Kashmir P.N.K.Bamzai Vol.I Page 90,91,92.*

80. *Kashmir and Central Asia P.N.K Bamzai Page 177-97.*

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Chapter 4

Kashmir And Buddhism: Interaction and Influence

Buddhism

was introduced in Kashmir is 3rd century BC and it enjoyed its glorious period up to 7th AD and continued to be one of the common beliefs of Kashmir till the end of 13th century when it was finally ousted from Kashmir. Buddhism influenced almost every aspect of Kashmiri society including religion art, and architecture. As we have already traced the part played by Kashmiri philosophers in the development of Mahayana in the previous, chapter, Buddhism seems to have lost much of its pristine glory and was slowly being supplanted by the reemerging Brahmanic thought and philosophy in India. In fact Buddhism and Brahmanism coexisted as popular religions all along right from the death of Buddha and in Kashmir as we have already noted, the two religions had in fact no separate existence. Even when by the end of the ninth century A.D., Buddhism witnessed decline in the rest of India it still continued to have its influence in Kashmir and along with Brahmanism enjoyed patronage of kings and their courts. But there was a time when the influence of Buddhism was deeply resented, especially after the reign of Kaniska, when under Nagarjuna's leadership Buddhism became firmly established. The Saiva philosophes thought that an organised attempt was necessary to counter the preaching of Sunyavad or agnosticism of the Buddhists. The only doctrine which could have proved strong and vigorous enough to serve the purpose was the absolute idealism of the Advaita school. This was no doubt strengthened by a wave of Brahminic revivalism raised as a result of Sankaracharya's preaching in the rest of the India and echoes of his

impress and influence are found in the writings of Kashmiri philosophers like Utpalacharya and Abhinavgupta.

So, we find a great fermentation of philosophic and religious thought in the Kashmir of eight and ninth centuries. It was in such a malice that the monistic philosophy of Kashmir Saivism took shape until it attained a status of a distinct school of philosophy differing so fundamentally from the other systems of Saivism that Madhavacharya in his *Sarva-darshana-sangraha* does not include it under Saiva-darsanas but deals with it as *Pratyabijnadarsana*. According to P.N. Bazaz equally remarkable if not more important than the establishment of the Madhyamik School was the evolution of a new religious philosophy by the Kashmir philosophers during the centuries following the one when Nagarjuna flourished. It is the glorious outcome of the fusion of the ancient Vedic and the Buddhist cultures. This indigenous system of philosophy is markedly different from the known systems of philosophies in India. It is called Kashmir Saivism or the Trika Shastra (the three fold science) or simple Trike (The Triple).

4.1 Kashmir Saivism (Trika Shastra) or Trika:

As the name implies this philosophy pertains to the three vital matters of greatest importance namely (1) man (2) his universe (3) the fundamental principle which keeps on restoring order, equilibrium and harmony in the universe where it is disturbed and by constant change. Though dealing with all the three in larger or lesser degrees the Trika is particularly interested in man and his personality. Shaivism considers *swatantrya* (complete freedom) as the one and the final goal of human life, this goal it calls the ultimate reality beyond which nothing exists. Shiva,

the lord is another name for independence. The only reality of the universe is Shiva who is infinite consciousness and unrestricted independence. He has many other features like omnipresence, eternality and formlessness though independence is peculiar to him. "Our bondage is due to ignorance", say the Shiva Sutras "Though the soul is infinite, consciousness man thinks I am finite; though independent he thinks, I am the finite body", observes Ksemendra in his comments on the Shiva Sutras, "The soul forgets that the world has existence only in Shiva and the soul is identical with the lord".

The Trika describes consciousness of man as the Atman the nuclear core which is the eternal and one witness of all that is undergoing ceaseless change namely the body, mind and spirit composed of thoughts, feelings and emotions which are subject to growth and decay. In this philosophy the word for change is "speeding" The aim of the Trika Shastra is to awaken man to the fact that this Atman, the witness is no other than the Shiva, the all powerful Lord of the universe, a second to Shiva there is none. The Trika Shastra is the synthesis of the essential things that are to be found in almost all the Indian philosophies plus the knowledge gained by the Kashmiri thinkers with their own observations and experience. It is an intelligent synthesis of all that is abiding, universal and enduring in the Vedanta, the Snakhya, Vaisheshika, the Nyama and the Vinaya of the Buddha. It also contains the core of Vaishnava and Shakti teachings especially the gospel of supreme love and all absorbing devotion of the beloved. "Shiva is the subject as well as the object, the experience as well as the experienced"³. In Shaivism beauty is another name for morally good and the power responsible for creation is the most

beautiful, Love, Truth and Beauty are the different names of one and the same thing.

The Trika philosophy is characterized by absolute monism, depth of thought and originality. Essentially it is an idealist philosophy unrelenting in its analysis and logic but it does not shrink realism to the objective reality of the world. According to Shaiva philosophy, soul is of the same nature as consciousness, there are no differences between the individual soul and the universal soul. Therefore the doctrine of the plurality of souls is denied in the Trika Shastra, while synthesizing the previous systems of Indian philosophy, the Kashmiri thinkers sedulously avoided to include barren parts represented by negativism, escapism and un-emotionalism of the Upanishadic by Vedanta. In Shaivism there is no *maya*, the principle which creates illusory forms. Even existence of promoting cause, Karma, or a material cause *prakriti* is not admitted. Siva is absolutely independent and creates all that exists under the influence of desire by the mere force of His will. He makes the world appear in Himself as if it were distinct from himself though it is not so really, even as objects appear in a mirror, God is as unaffected by the objects of His creations as the mirror is by the images reflected in it.

In Trika Shiva is represented as the symbol of the external process of destruction and creation. Shiva is Bhairava (Terrible) and also Kala (Time destroyer). He is at the same time instinct love. The Shaivism has no use of self mortification as a way of realization.⁴ The Trika literature is divided into three parts namely (a) The Agama Shastra (Science which had come down from remote antiquity. They are believed to have been the discourses between Shiva and Shakti). (b) The Spanda Shastra (Science of

universe as ever changing or speeding phenomena). (c) The Pratyabhijñā Śāstra (The science of Recognition). The system of Shaivism was first founded by Vasugupta⁵. In the 9th century A.D. and the first book on the subject which has come down to us is Shiva Sūtra Vimarśinī and Āgama Śāstra. Vasugupta himself wrote Spanda Kārikā, an important book on the subject. After him followed many other thinkers of eminence who either made original contribution to the Trika philosophy or wrote commentaries on Āgama Śāstra or the works of their predecessors.⁶

Despite the wide spread of Buddhism in Kashmir the popularity of Shiva's worship and many broad conceptualizations about popular religion never ceased to be. Though a popular creed in Kashmir, Buddhism with its non-soul doctrine and Śūnyā like nihilistic conceptions failed to appeal to the spiritual impulse of Kashmir. The result was the Churning of an affirmative state strand of thought that evolved as a reaction to the formulations of the Buddhist thinkers. With Shiva its core concept, the new thought drew open the philosophy of Sāṃkhya, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism to weave its own harmonized pattern planked on non-dual structures. As a monistic absolutism it recycled old metaphysical and epistemological issues and evolved new approach and premise to yarn its world view logically and coherently. Śūnyā⁷ as a vital Buddhist concept was appropriated and was oriented in a manner that appeared absolutely at variance with its original Buddhist trappings and semantics. The non-dual thinkers wedded to Shaivism put the Buddhist thesis of Śūnyā to a thorough and incisive debate in all its ramifications. Śūnyā as a concept has been incorporated from Buddhism especially its variant called Mādhyamika. The Shaivite thinkers have modified Śūnyā to reinforce

and strengthen their own philosophical positions and fundamental thesis of *Monism*. The Buddhist meanings and trappings of Sunya⁸ have been totally discarded and given a new orientation in sync with the core philosophy of non-dual Saivism. The very definition of Sunya has been altered as '*Shunyam ashymaym iti Ukhtam*' which means Sunya is said be asunya. The definition makes it clear that the sunya is not void or emptiness. The Shaivites translate Sunya as "**abhava**" which when broken up becomes *a+bhava* meaning Shiva and world or objects lying in his consciousness.

Lala Ded, a great (Saiva practitioner is said to have experienced some such states where she felt that she neither belonged to the world of objects nor had the spiritual flashes that would have satiated her yearnings of attaining identity with Shiva. Such of her conditions are termed as sunya which every initiate has to experience while working out Shaiva praxis under the guidance of a Saiva guru, a realised soul⁹).

4.2 Influence on Art and Architecture

Greco-Buddhism is the cultural syncretism between the culture of classical Greece and Buddhism, which developed over a period of close to 800 years in central Asia in the area corresponding to modern day Afghanistan and Pakistan, between the 4th century BC and the 5th Century A.D. Greco-Buddhism influenced the artistic¹⁰ (and, possibly conceptual) development of Buddhism and in particular Mahayana Buddhism, before it was adopted by central and North Eastern Asia from the 1st century A.D., ultimately spreading to China, Korea and Japan¹¹. Kashmir remained under the influence of Buddhism for a period of about 1000 years and this tradition of art and architecture must have influenced

the regional art and architecture of Kashmir. As the patrons of this art were the Kushanas and Kashmir also remained under Kushanas for a considerable period of time, hence the art marks its very impress on the surviving remains though scanty in number of ancient buildings of Kashmir. Kashmir has preserved some good specimens of sculpture and it is not difficult to reconstruct a sufficient history of the development of plastic art. Very little has however survived of the Kashmiri art of the centuries before the Christian era.

The village of Harwan, 12 miles from the present capital of Srinagar, has yielded archeological remains consisting of an apsidal temple with a courtyard surrounded by wall, a building complex including a *stupa* and a chapel and other enclosures built in pebble walls¹⁰. At Harwan large quantities of small pebbles were available so buildings were constructed at first with pebbles and mud mortar. The small enclosures as well as the wall around the apsidal *chaitya* build in this fashion thus belong to the early structural phase. In order to make the structure durable the wall was reinforced with the insertion of irregular blocks of stones at intervals. This type of structure may be called the *diaper-pebble* style. The apsidal of the temple was constructed in this style. Both the *stupa* and the Chaitya correspond in very particular to the *stupa* courts at Gandhara.

The temple almost in ruins is a large apsidal structure square in front and round at the back, a distinctive form of Buddhist temple common in rock architecture of the more southernly parts of India, but rarely found elsewhere¹¹. The *stupa* was square in plan with its base in three tiers and approached by a flight of steps on its western sides, the whole being contained within an open quadrangle.

Another temple which closely copies the structures of Gandhara in plan and broad details is the temple of Rudresa at Loduv about 3.2 kilometers on the road leading from Pampore to Avantipura. It has a close resemblance to the old temple at Guniyar in the Swat Valley. The ground plan of the main temple is a square of 24 feet. There is only one doorway to the W-S-W. Its head is semicircular with a pyramidal pediment slightly projected and divided into two portions, of which the upper one is plain and the other is occupied by a semi circular ornament. The apex of the pediment reaches the top of the cornice which runs round the top of the walls on the outside. The roof is entirely gone. The interior is a circle, the diameter of which diminishes from the ground upwards. The top of the doorway inside is formed by the underside of the course from which the cornice of the interior is projected. The basement of the temple stands on a plate form 48 square feet, faced with stone walls forming a sort of lower basement.¹³

Some of the archeological remains of Uskur are undoubtedly of later date, but a ruined *stupa* which was afterwards superimposed by another of the Karkota period and a large number of terracotta sculptures may very well be assigned to an earlier period, that is the post Kushana¹². In ground plan, it has a square base and seems to have closely corresponded to the contemporary *stupas* of Gandhara. The sculptures in their artistic style are much alike to the Jaulian sculptures of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. They are evidently the products of the Second Gandhara School, which had abandoned the use of hard stone of the first and had adopted stucco in the North West and terracotta in the more South Easterly provinces as materials for their artistic creations and

had developed a style of art, that while it absorbed some of the formalities of the early school, yet had definitely developed a sensitive and romantic style of its own. The sculptors of Uskur generally employed their skill in depicting the heads of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. In fact Uskur art was a religious one states Dr. S.C. Ray centered round the cult of the Sakya Prince. The most striking feature of these terracotta busts is the variety of their wonderful facial expression. Bodhisattva Siddhartha Gautama with a delicate face and a crown over his head is as charming as ever. The emaciated ascetic shows prominent veins coming out on the face. And the lay worshipers sometimes with a rude look on the eyes or at times with a rather vacant look, add to the varieties.¹⁴ (*Plate 2nd*)

Of the art objects recovered from the Buddhist ruins of Pandrethan mention may be made of several images of Buddha. One standing *abayamudra*, with broad and well developed chest, thin waist and a spiritual and compassionate expression in the face appears to be prototype of the Sarnath Buddha¹⁵. But the finest specimen is a relief sculpture which depicts the birth of Siddhartha.¹⁶ The well developed bodies, graceful poise; delicate features of the face and such technical details as long elastic fingers with tips backwards reveal fully the great influence that the Gupta art phase exerted at that time on the local art of Kashmir.

According to Dr. S.C. Ray the temple architecture of Kashmir has got certain peculiar characteristics of its own. The principal features consist in the classical design of the temple, the presence of trefoil and within high pitched triangular pediment the use of pyramidal roof and dome shaped ceiling and the employment of fluted pillars with capital

resembling the Doric order. The temple of ancient Kashmir was conceived as a whole leaving no opportunity for further addition. In this respect, it is different from the temples of the plains of India. The cellular quadrangle with the central structure in the middle of the courtyard was undoubtedly copied from the monastery of the Buddhists. The trefoil arch which is invariable present in the recess or niche of a Kashmiri temple seems to be copied from the Stupas and *monasteries* of Gandhara. The pediment too has its prototype in some of the oldest structures of the same land. The pyramidal shape of the roofs was necessitated by the climate of the valley, where snowfall is a common feature. Two types of ceilings are mainly discernible; one of these was formed of overlapping stones a system followed in the plains of India also. But the other type, the dome shaped was peculiar to Kashmir. The domes were hemispherical in shape. They were constructed of concentric horizontal courses each circle projecting beyond the one below it. The opening of the top was closed with a single slab in which a lotus was sometimes engraved. The *cella* being square, the plan was first reduced to the circle by filling in corners with light pendentives. As to the pillars used in the temples all authorities agree that they were of Doric order. There is however some difference which may be observed in the style. Though the upper member of both is an *ovolo*, the Kashmiri column is decorated with the design of a full series of blown lotus petals¹⁷. Some of the classical features in the architecture of Kashmir are undoubtedly to be sought in Gandhara, to the artistic conventions of which ancient Kashmir owned a great debt.

4.3 Continuity of Buddhist traditions in Kashmir

Kashmir is the land of saints and is bestowed with religious wealth in the form of numerous shrines and places of worship of different faiths. According to the oldest Hindu Book Nilmatpurana, the valley of Kashmir is known as Bagh-i-Reshain or *Rishi wari* which literally means 'Garden of Sages', Kashmiris often refer to their land as *Pir vaer* or *Rishi vaeir* which means the valley of Sufi Pirs or Rishis. Shrines dedicated to these men of God are to be found in almost every village in the Kashmir. The valley of Kashmir was suffering from social, political and economical travails when highly exalted groups of people called Rishis emerged and by their golden words and kind actions gave comfort to the people and shared their sufferings. They spread the message of love, humanity and brotherhood which highly influenced the thoughts and attitude of Kashmir's for generations to come.

The most dominant influence on the Kashmiri Muslims in terms of their *Kashmiryat*, is that of the Rishi order of sufi's, while the sufi orders like the Suharwardi, Kubravi, Naqashbandi and Quadri arrived in Kashmir in 14th century A.D. from *Persia*, Central Asia and Central and North India. But the Rishi order evolved in the valley itself indigenously in the beginning of the 15th Century A.D. The indigenous Rishi order of sufi's however does differ not only from the establishmentarian and fundamentalist Muslims but also from other Sufi orders in its philosophy and way of life. Many writers who have chronicled the life and times of Kashmir of this period have been attracted by their unique way of life and philosophy of the Rishi order of Sufis. Abul Fazl, for instance is all praise for them. He writes "The most respected class of people in this country (Kashmir) is the Rishi. Although they have not abandoned the traditional and customary forms of worship

(*Taqlid*), but they are true in their worship. They do not denounce men belonging to different faiths. They do not have tongue of desire, and do not seek to obtain worldly objects. They plant fruit bearing trees in order that people may obtain benefit from these; they abstain from meat and do not marry¹⁸. The development the Rishis was thus probably due to already permeation of the valley with the traditions of Hindu *Ascetics* and Buddhist renunciation. These Rishis thus bear a close resemblance to the lifestyle of the Hindu Rishis and Buddhist monks. They kept themselves away from the all worldly relationships, they neither marry nor bother themselves with a family life. Piety was their apparel, their nights were devoted to worship and during the day they worship incessantly. They abandoned all worldly desires and they found desires root cause of falsehood, a theme which is the base of Buddhism.

G. Mohammad Sufi Writes in his valuable contribution "Islamic culture in Kashmir" states that the *sufis* seem to have simulated the tendency to mysticism for which Buddhism and *vedantism* had already paved the way.¹⁹ It seems as the intellectual tussle between the Brahmanism and Buddhism resulted into the development of Shaivism similarly later the blending of some Buddhist ideas with Islam preached by the *sufis* resulted in the development of unique Kashmiri Rishism.

The highest objects of worship for the Buddhists are the three jewels, *Triratna* or *Ratnatraya*, the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha. Besides the three *ratnas* to which the highest honour is paid, there are other more objects of worship the relics of holy persons ((including the objects having served the use of them like sacred spots and holy trees.) and monuments erected to their memory by the piety of a grateful posterity²⁰. The same

tradition is still prevalent among majority of Kashmiri Muslims though in an Islamized way. The Ziarats (Astaans) or Khanqahas are either tombs or the places where the Sufi saints have worshiped or used for the propagation of their message are held sacred in somewhat similar pattern by majority of the Kashmiri Muslims.

Further the method used by the Sufis to propagate their message, the formation of orders has certainly got the impress of Buddhist *sangha*. The tradition of abstaining from meat (*parakh* in Kashmiri) on the anniversaries of some Sufi saints like *Rishi mol* in Anantnag District also carries the impress of Buddhism that flourished in the valley centuries ago. Likewise certain trees of Kashmir are considered sacred even today due to their connection with any of the Sufi saints, but are not worshiped as they are in Buddhism. This approach has helped in the conservation of forests to some extent also. All these practices make us to feel the presence of Buddhism in the present Kashmir, though in a different manner or indirectly.

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3. *Culture And Political History of Kashmir* P.N.K.Bamzai Vol.I Page 276.
4. *Ibid. pp. 278,79.*
5. *Vasugupta (860-925 A.D) was a native of Kashmir and was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Shiva Sutras are believed to be the knowledge amassed through direct realization. It is believed that one night Lord Shiva appeared to Vasugupta in a dream and instructed him to go to a particular place called Harwan(12 miles from Srinagar). There in the forest of Myna he found a large rock nestled on the side of a small stream. By his mere touch the huge rock turned over and the mysteriously inscribed Shiva Sutras were revealed to him. The rock became known as Shankar Pal(Rock of Shiva). Even today devout Kashmiri Saivas pray at the destined place.*
6. *Culture And Political History of Kashmir* P.N.K.Bamzai Vol.I Page 272.
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14. *Early History and Culture of Kashmir* 2nd Edition-1970 (Dr.S.C Ray) page 228, 253.
15. *Handbook of Archaeological & Numismatic Sections of the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar.*R.C.Kak Page 29.
16. *The scene depicts Maya Buddha's mother, apprehending the coming of her child started for her father's home. On the way she felt the pains of travel and gave birth to the Prince. The Queen mother is seen in the middle, holding the branch of the Asoka Tree in her right hand while the left rests on her sister Prajapati who appears on the right of the picture. A female figure on the top of the relief holds a chouri.*
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Chapter 5

Conclusion

With a legendary origin from Sati Sar with the efforts of sage Kasyapa, Kashmir has remained a hub of spiritual and intellectual activities. Initially animism found its place in the Naga cult, the most ancient religion of the Kashmir. Naga cult remained one of the most popular faiths of Kashmir. Perhaps it suited the economic and political needs of the people at that time, a society with a sort of hunting-gathering and pastoral economy and a tribal polity. With the immigration of Indo-Aryans from other parts of India, Vedic religion was brought to Kashmir which flourished there side by side with the other faiths. The turbulent political conditions that prevailed over major part of the Ancient Kashmir history, resulted in the strengthening of the position of the Brahmins, the uppermost Varna of the Vedic religion, as it was more viable for the kings to ensure peace and prosperity to their kingdoms through the medium of religion than that of the political manipulations, and of course, it proved an effective device to secure the obedience and allegiance of the people to the commands of the state and respect for its authority and dignity, this religion orientation of the state affairs preserved the stability of society which had assumed a heterogeneous character owing to the settlement of outsiders in Kashmir, who immigrated later and were known as *mlechas*¹, according to the famous Rajtarangini of Kalhana Pandit and Nilmat Puran, the primary sources of the Ancient Kashmir. Enforcement of two sets of codes one for the native population and the other for the so called *mlechas*, augmented heterogeneity of society, creating a pattern of relationships that stimulated delicate nuances of social distinction and

diversity as signified by Varnas or caste system. In other words it led to the formation of a stratified society of which some strata enjoyed both political and economical privileges while others were deprived of the both.

In 3rd century B.C Majjhantika was sent by Asoka as per the program drafted out at the conclusion of 3rd Buddhist Council (though not accepted generally a World Buddhist Council in true sense²) for the propagation of the Buddhist faith. The highly socio-economically stratified conditions of the valley made it to sustain the ideological onslaught of Buddhism, a religion based on rational thinking and modest living. But it seems that the principles of equality and rationality were not solely responsible for its popularization among the people, but the royal patronage also played a pivotal role. As I earlier mentioned, that a set of factors played a vital role in the determination of rise and decline of different religions in Ancient Kashmir and Buddhism was not an exception in this regard. Interaction between the society, polity and economy often bring changes in the whole edifice of the society of a region including its religion. Like polity the economy of the Kashmir was also unstable as well as non-sustainable, pastoral and fragmented in nature which made life of people very insecure. Consequently they depended much on King than on themselves. Perhaps that was the reason why kings or elites enjoyed all power, rights and liberties while masses had none. People in this situation could not think of civil or political liberties. They had no religious liberties as well, because taking up a different faith than that of king would bring wrath (though there were some tolerant kings too) of the king. That is perhaps why religions flourished at the hands of the kings and princes, but certainly at the cost of the people's lives. Perhaps it was the reason why

Buddhism flourished under the patronage of Asoka in 3rd B.C and Kusanas especially under the patronage of King Kaniska in 1st century A.D.

All credible evidences from the annals of Kashmir History establish that Kashmir was pivotal centre of Buddhist thought and learning. To counter the narrow philosophical positions of the Hinayana Buddhism, it was in Kashmir that doctrinal positions and theoretical mould of the Mahayana Buddhism were formulated and shaped out. A galaxy of Buddhist scholars of great eminence who were either Kashmiri in their origin or had settled in Kashmir from other parts of India contributed their speculative faculties to the enunciation of the contours of Mahayana Buddhism and enriched its thought-content by shaping out its structure. All concerted efforts were made to disseminate the thought to a number of countries beyond the margins of the native country.

It seems that Buddhism never declined completely in Kashmir though we do not find any population after 13th A.D of Buddhist faith in Kashmir (though there is majority of Buddhists in Ladakh division of present Kashmir), but the growth of Saivism, a unique blend of Buddhism and traditional Brahmanism became prominent after 7 A.D. The cardinal principles of equality, individual liberty, absence of dogma and rituals of Buddhism became the core principles of Kashmir Saivism. Though some scholars are of the opinion that Kashmir Saivism refuted the concept of Sunyavad or Voidism but Dr.T.R.V Murti forcefully argued against those scholars who had interpreted *Sunya* as voidism, emptiness or sheer Nihilism .He places *Sunya* concept of Buddhism at par with Vedanta concept of Brahman. Kashmir Saivism absorbed the *Sunya* concept in the same manner placing it behind the world of relativity and conditioned existence. Buddhism made its appearance in the form of Kashmir Sufism, a

14th century A.D. religious movement, much influenced by the Buddhism. Many traditions of Buddhism are still prevalent in both Hindu as well as Muslim communities of Kashmir which attests the fact that how deeply Buddhism influenced the society of Kashmir.

In fact no religion is uprooted completely, there is a continuity which keeps towards progression, while some religions or faiths rise and others undergo decline, it absorbs the best suited principles of them thus enriching the cultural mosaic of a region. India in common and Kashmir in a particular sense has kept this phenomenon alive. Kashmir being the centre of such spiritual and cultural activities developed the unique qualities of religious toleration and harmony. Perhaps this is the reason behind the strong secular nature of Kashmiri people. Saivism and Kashmir Sufism are the examples of such syncretic faith and Lala Ded and Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani the icons of it. That is why Mahatma Gandhi, a man of vision recognized this secular characteristic feature of Kashmiri people when he visited Kashmir on 1st August 1947 A.D. while addressing a large gathering, he said that *"It was difficult for me to know whether it was predominantly Muslim or Hindu"*. It was not a sudden phenomenon, but an outcome of the age old interaction between the Naga Cult, Brahmanism and Buddhism which had made Kashmir culture and its people so unique.

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